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# *The Elementary English Review*

SCHOOLS DEPARTMENT

VOL. XVIII

MAY 1941

No. 5

## Special Number

### LIBRARIES AND BOOK SELECTION

- Growing Up With Books... MARGARET HAMPEL and GERTRUDE CORDTS  
 Under the Circus Tent... F. MARIE FOSTER  
 Keeping Up With Children's Literature... MARK KARP and  
 DOROTHY A. ABRAMS  
 Problems in Primary Book Selection: IV. The Selection  
 of First and Second Readers... GEORGE SPACHE  
 Our Plastic Language... W. K. TRAUGER  
 Children's Books in Adult Libraries... SISTER M. ANTONITA  
 Terrible Tales for Tots... MAY M. WRIGHT  
 The Newbery Award Again... BETTY HAMILTON and  
 ISABEL C. MCLELLAND  
 The Thorndike-Century Senior Dictionary (review)... E. W. DOLCH  
 Compton's Pictured Encyclopedia (review)... MARGARET L. WHITE  
 New Books for Boys and Girls (reviews)  
 Higher Critical Standards (editorial)

### THE ELEMENTARY ENGLISH REVIEW

J. L. CERTAIN, *Editor*  
 Detroit, Michigan

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# The Elementary English Review

J. L. Certain, *Editor*

VOL. XVIII

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## The Course of Study in Elementary School English

Reading Literature  
Book Selection  
School Libraries  
Book Reviews

Composition Spelling  
Grammar  
Essentials of Speech  
and Writing  
Standard Tests  
Test Procedures and  
Remedial Drills

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NEW PUBLICATIONS

*Helping Children to Read.* By GERTRAUDE HILDRETH and JOSEPHINE WRIGHT. 96 pp. Cloth \$1.35. Paper 90 cents. A detailed description of procedures in a remedial reading class conducted during a recent summer session at Teachers College, Columbia University: the analysis of each child's problem, the group activities carried on, the individual help given each child, the materials used, the records, and the reports. The facts given here will assist teachers in preventing reading difficulties and in dealing more effectively with children who have reading problems.

*Critical Reading Comprehension in the Intermediate Grades.* By ROMA GANS, PH. D. 135 pp. Cloth \$1.85. Reading comprehension of the type required in reference reading demands the composite ability of understanding the problem under consideration, remembering it while reading, and selecting or rejecting content on the basis of its relevancy and authenticity. This is a study of the reference reading ability of 417 intermediate grade pupils.

*Prevention of Failure in First Grade Reading by Means of Adjusted Instruction.* By HOWARD T. DUNKLIN, PH. D. 111 pp. Cloth \$1.60. This study surveys the literature concerned with primary reading, with a view to developing a tentative program of adjusted instruction which would be practicable in an average schoolroom; tests the program experimentally in order to determine what degree of success would follow its application; and makes the program available for use in further research and in educational practice.

*Units of Work and Centers of Interest in the Organization of the Elementary School Curriculum.* By SADIE GOGGANS, PH. D. 140 pp. Cloth \$1.60. In this study the author critically examines the two antithetical schools of thought in education which influence the organization of the elementary school curriculum. She undertakes to clarify some of the points at issue between the curriculum focused upon organized subject matter and the curriculum primarily concerned with aspects of child living.

**BUREAU OF PUBLICATIONS**  
Teachers College, Columbia University  
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Those Old Magazines in the Attic!**

Readers have asked *The Review* to help them secure out-of-print numbers. If you are willing to part with your copies of the following issues, please write *The Review* office (Box 67, N. End Sta. Detroit)

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# # #

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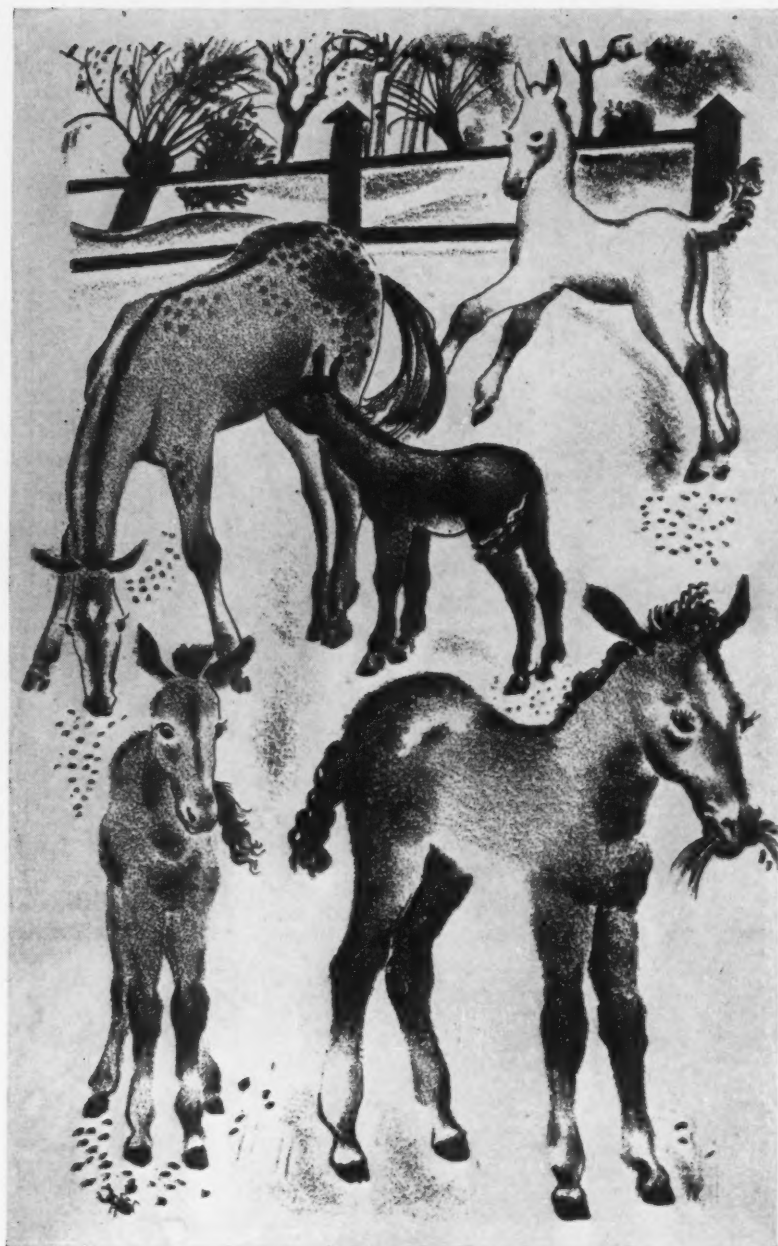
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# # #

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REVIEW**  
Box 67, N. End Sta. Detroit, Mich.



From *Powder*, by Esther Averhill. Illus. by Fedor Rojankovsky. Random House.  
See "Under the Circus Tent," by F. Marie Foster, page 167.



# THE ELEMENTARY ENGLISH REVIEW

VOL. XVIII

MAY 1941

No. 5

## Growing Up With Books

MARGARET HAMPEL

*Associate Professor of Education  
Ohio University, Athens*

GERTRUDE CORDTS

*Traveling Librarian  
Athens County, Ohio*

IN MANY of our public schools the library is an important part of school life, and at an early age children begin to make use of the school and public libraries. There are many demands for books in a modern program of education where children and teachers use available resources to explore the problems that emerge through experiences of group living. Elementary school children develop remarkable zest and facility in the use of the library as they seek answers to problems and as they turn to books for recreation and enjoyment. We are glad for the efforts of parents, administrators, and teachers to provide books, for books are an important aspect of the growing-up experiences of children.

But we have other groups that would be without books were it not for the traveling library. The lives of too many of our children and of adults in mining communities are as drab as the houses in which they live and as the worn-out soil on which they are struggling to survive.

### STUDENT-TEACHERS AND THE BOOKMOBILE

Some of our students in teacher-education at Ohio University will teach in such communities. While they are on the campus they have access to the facilities of a modern library. In dealing with the question of an approach to the teaching of reading in the elementary school we started out to investigate our resources and lacks and to try to interpret the living conditions of the people. The students who were carrying out the investigation arranged to have Miss Mildred Sandoe, State Library Worker in Ohio spend a day with us to help us get acquainted with the assistance provided through state services. She brought films, photographs, and bulletins, and spent the day in informal discussion groups. In the evening the county librarian, Miss Dorothy Wightman, and the traveling librarian, Miss Gertrude Cordts, joined us in an open meeting with interested people in the community. The driver of the county

bookmobile drove to the University Elementary School where we were meeting and many members of our group got acquainted for the first time with the services of the traveling library. Since that meeting in late fall the students have gone out on the bookmobile. They have assisted in the work of handling and checking out books, and have become aware of the value of rural library service. They have worked out a children's room in a small branch library, have helped arrange inviting posters, bulletin boards, and books around some theme of current interest. At present they are helping make a movie<sup>1</sup> which will show the library service in the county.

In Athens County only a few short years ago many of the people were bookless. The Athens County bookmobile has helped solve this problem. We have seen for ourselves the service it gives, the joy it brings to teachers, children and adults in the communities having few outside contacts. We feel that those who have seen what such service can be like will never be content to have their school and their community remain without books. We believe our experience has been profitable for us and we hope it will be profitable for the communities we may live in in the future.

In the next part of this article, Miss Gertrude Cordts, librarian of the Athens County bookmobile, tells of her experiences.

#### ATHENS COUNTY BOOKMOBILE SERVICE

The Athens County library service began very humbly. It has had to cope with unusual problems, yet it has a record of real achievement and triumph to show. Athens county children are now growing up with books! That is the important thing, the glorious fact. They are growing up with books!



Out they come to exchange their books.

A great majority of the children in the northern and most densely populated section of the county come from underprivileged homes such as are found in most coal mining regions. Even in the southern half the children from the rather barren, hilly farms have had little access to books, magazines or newspapers. Our school library shelves for the most part are about as bare as Mother Hubbard's cupboard. Boys and girls never had books to grow on until the county library came along.

Library service to the rural areas from the Nelsonville Public Library began in the fall of 1937. At that time the book collection had grown large enough to permit leaving a deposit of about ten books per teacher. At first these deposits were very small; the head librarian in

<sup>1</sup> This film will soon be complete. It is in color, and Miss Hampel states that it is available for use by groups. Write her directly.

her auto took these collections to the teachers, making an effort to reach the outlying schools at least twice before winter weather came.

Then in the following spring, in February 1938, a bookmobile was purchased with the help of the Ohio State Library. One thousand dollars worth of new books were put on its shelves and a trained librarian was placed in charge. The bookmobile began its schedule under the slogan: "Library service every three weeks." It stopped at every school and every village.

Business was not very brisk in the beginning. For one reason the librarian was seriously hampered because the book supply was pitifully inadequate.

In most villages only two or three people were curious and interested and bold enough to go to the bookmobile to borrow its free books. It was at the schools, though, that the reception of the book truck was surprising. Most teachers welcomed the book truck arrival, were enthusiastic over the service, and appreciative of this boon to their teaching. They avidly chose books for their classroom use and encouraged the pupils to select and enjoy other books for themselves. But at times there was a different reception. There were teachers who were indifferent. They couldn't take the time to come to the truck to get books; they didn't want to be bothered with them or be responsible for any of the books. The

consolidated schools of three townships were hostile and even banned library books. Books carried germs and they wanted nothing to do with them! All this happened in a county where schools had few adequate textbooks, less supplementary material, and almost no library books!

Patience, coddling, explaining overcame much of this. Little by little more enthusiastic friends were made. It is a great satisfaction now to see the book-

mobile stop at a school, and to watch the pupils come out in groups, grade by grade from the lowest to to highest, all returning with books that are their very own for two weeks. Second, third, fourth and fifth graders come out nearly one hundred



On pleasant days, books are checked at a table outside the truck.

per cent to borrow books. They are the ones who have grown up with our county library books. After that the percentage falls off as the grades advance. Patrons from the upper grades are fewer. They are the real readers, students newly encouraged by teachers to realize the value of books or those who have to get in a book report. As time goes on we expect upper graders to use books as much as do their younger classmates now. Book reading is a habit formed when very young. It needs to be carefully fostered, and in our county where there are so few books in the home, most of this depends upon teachers and the librarian.

This desire to turn to the library for help in solving special problems, and for enjoyment of books is something which the teachers need to learn for themselves first. It took three years of regular fortnightly library stops before one industrial arts teacher used the library. He came then because one of "the boys in his class had the best book on metalcraft he ever saw" and when he learned it came from the library he wondered if there might be more. He left with a half dozen books on design, metal-work, leather craft, wood and soap carving and a promise of more next trip. But how are boys and girls to be encouraged toward good reading when a teacher's personal reading is limited to an occasional western?

Boys and girls from the schools have taken books home to mother or dad, and they have carried home the

word that good books could be secured free of charge from the "library truck" at the nearest stopping place. Gradually in that way village circulation has been built up. And one satisfied and delighted adult passes the news along to a neighbor. During 1940, 81,650 books were circulated from the bookmobile alone. Branch libraries in the larger communities more than tripled this figure. Of a county population of 45,000 more than one-quarter or 13,352 people have registered as borrowers.

Many discouraging problems have had to be faced and solved by the county library staff, but the response and eagerness of the people served has more than compensated them for these. Our mining communities are learning to read. As soon as the truck stops in one mining community—the one which not so long ago enjoyed the reputation of being the

toughest spot in the county—it is filled with adult borrowers, young women and a few men. It is true that most of their reading is western and light fiction, but they do read and occasionally they get the better books. And it is always a pleasure to look forward to chats with the real readers scattered over the county, to exchange ideas and opinions of favorite books and authors. Discouragement is forgotten when a teacher reports that *Chinky Joins the Circus* was the first



No time is lost in beginning to read the newly-selected books.

book an eleven-year-old boy ever read through in his life, and that he wants more. It is forgotten when we meet the few patrons who regularly walk a couple of miles each way from "up their holler" to meet the nearest bookmobile stop, to borrow an armful of books. One cold winter morning a young man walked five miles from his farm, when side roads were impassable for cars, to meet the bookmobile at the village station and to exchange a market basket full of books.



# Under The Circus Tent

F. MARIE FOSTER

Director of Library Education,  
State Teachers College, Kutztown, Pa.  
and Summer Session Librarian  
Smith Memorial Library, Chautauqua, N. Y.

**H**ERE it comes! The circus is in town!" Its appeal is universal with both children and adults. The indomitable courage of performers, the pageantry, spectacular feats, gay parade, lure of the crowd make it an event for the smallest town or for Madison Square Garden.

Much has been written about it, and material in this list has been selected for its suitability in the elementary school. No attempt has been made to grade the material, since picture books have an appeal for the upper grades and books with more text have intriguing pictures for the lower grades. One group is labelled "Stories," and a star is used to indicate a few of the books in which the reading material is specifically for older boys and girls.

An additional list is included for the teacher. These books will give background in preparation for the circus unit. Many of them contain excellent pictures and dramatic episodes from circus life which can be retold to the children. Teachers who are planning an extensive unit on the subject will find valuable material and suggestions in Tibbels' *The Circus Comes to School*. For material in readers and primers a list can be located through *Subject Index to Readers and Primers* by Eloise Rue.



*Andy and the Lion.* Written and illus. by James Daugherty. Viking.

## MUSIC—RECORDS

- Le Carnaval des Animaux (The Carval of the Animals). Camille Saint Saens. Victor. No. 7200/2, vm-71 (Alb)
- Circus Echoes. Ringling Brothers and Barnum and Bailey Combined Bands. No. 22438-A, Victor.
- Circus Parade March. Hazel Kinsella. Victor No. 20154
- Colossus of Columbia March. Ringling. Victor No. 22464-B
- Entry of the Gladiators. Ringling. Victor No. 22438-B
- Gentry's Triumphal March. Victor No. 22671-B
- Suite from "Petrouchka." Igor Stravinsky. Victor No. M-49 (6998-7000)

## FILMS

- Behind the Ropes.* National Dairy Council. 221 North LaSalle St., Chicago, Ill. IR, 16 silent \$75.00

"Adventures of three children who go to the circus and are taken behind the scenes to see how circus people and animals live and work." Producer

- Circus City.* Educational Film Service. 77 Woolnough Ave., Battle Creek, Michigan, 1937. (Circus ser.) 30 min. 16 silent \$50.00; rent \$2.00

"In *Circus City* the activities of the Hagenbach Wallace Circus at the winter quarters in Peru, Indiana are shown in detail. The first part shows the work necessary in preparing the caravan for the road. The second part shows the training of animals including seals, lions, zebras, camels, horses, dogs, and elephants, as well as shots of the hippopotamus, the gnu, the axis deer, and the baby camel." Producer

*Here Comes the Circus.* Educational Film Service. 77 Woolnough Avenue, Battle Creek, Michigan, 1937. (Circus Ser.) 14 min. 16 silent \$25.00. Rent \$1.25.

"Shows activities connected with the setting up of a big circus. Scenes include the wagons coming on the set; the raising of the big top; driving the stakes; the coming of the elephants, camels, and zebras; the blacksmith shop; and the parade into the big top for the afternoon performance." Producer

*Sawdust Sidelights.* Bell and Howell Co. 1801 Larchmont Avenue, Chicago, Ill. 1935. 11 min. 16 sound. Rent \$1.50.

"The Barnum and Bailey circus prepares for the coming season at Sarasota, Florida. Everything is painted and polished, animals are trained, acrobats practice and aerialists try new stunts. Finally the elephants push the wagons onto the flat cars and the World's Greatest Show starts on another summer journey." Producer

### SONGS

The Circus. In *Folk Songs and Art Songs.* By Teresa M. Armitage. C. C. Birchard, 1925. Teachers ed.

The Circus. In *Sing-it-Again Book* for Small Children. By June Norton. June Norton Pub. 4 West 40th St., New York City, 1935.

The Circus Band. In *Happy Songs for Happy Children.* By Meta Siebold. G. Schirmer, n.d.

The Circus Clown. In the *Circus Book.* By L. R. Smith. Flanagan, c.1923..

Circus Fun. In *Sing and Sing Again*, tone plays and songs for the beginning singer. By A. S. Boesel. Oxford, c.1938.

The Clown. In *The Sing and Play Book.* By Ethel Crowninshield. Boston Music Co., Boston, Mass. c.1938.

The Elephant. In *Songs of the Child World*; words by A. C. D. Riley; Music by J. L. Jaynor. Presser, 1897. v.1.

The Elephant. In *New Songs for New Voices*, By Louis Untermeyer. Harcourt, 1931.

The Elephant. In *Songs to Sing to Children.* By Albert Ernest Wier. Harcourt, 1935.

The Jolly Clown. In *Happy Songs for Happy Children.* By Meta Siebold. G. Schirmer. n.d.

A Song About an Elephant. In *Another Singing Time.* By S. N. Coleman and A. G. Thorn. Reynal, c.1937.

### POEMS

Circus. In *Joan's Door.* By Eleanor Farjeon. Stokes, 1927.

Circus. In *Under the Tree.* By E. M. Roberts, il. by F. N. Bedford. Viking, 1930

Circus Cavalcade. In *Under the Tent of the Sky.* By J. E. Brewton. Macmillan, 1937.

Circus Day. In *A Little Book of Days.* By Rachel Field. Doubleday, 1936 .

Circus Garland. By Rachel Field. In *Three Owls*; third book. By Anne C. Moore. Coward-McCann, 1931.

Circus Day Parade. By J. W. Riley. In *The Poetry Book.* By Miriam Blanton and others. v.4. Rand, 1926.

Circus Parade. By Olive Beaupre Miller. In *Golden Flute.* By Alice Hubbard and others. John Day, 1932.

Circus-Postered Barn. By Elizabeth Coatsworth. In *Modern American Poetry.* By Louis Untermeyer. 3d ed. Houghton, 1921.

Clown's Baby. By M. T. Janvier. In *The Poetry Book.* By Miriam Blanton and others. v.5. Rand, 1926.

The Kallyope Yell. In *Johnny Appleseed and Other Poems.* By Vachel Lindsay, il. by George Richards. Macmillan, 1928.

Our Circus. By Laura Lee Randall. In *Golden Flute.* By Alice Hubbard and others. John Day, 1932.

P. T. Barnum, 1810-1891. In *A Book of Americans.* By Rosemary and Stephen Benet. Farrar and Rinehart, 1933.

Parade. In *Branches Green.* By Rachel Field; il. by Dorothy Lathrop. Macmillan, 1934.

Roundabouts and Swings. By P. R. Chalmers. In *Junior Poetry Cure.* By Robert H. Schauffler. Dodd, 1931.

### PICTURE BOOKS

*A B C of Babar.* By Jean de Brunhoff. Random House, 1936.

C stands for circus, clown and many other things.

*Andy and the Lion.* By James Henry Daugherty. Viking, 1937.

Irresistible pictures of the lion act in the circus.

*Breakfast with the Clowns.* By Rosalie Slocum. Viking, 1937.

Circus thrills in pictures with slight text. Good for clown unit.

*Circus and All About It.* By Elmer Boyd Smith. Stokes, 1909.

Picture book with full page illustrations.

*Circus Fun for First and Second Year Pupils.* By B. B. Smart and others. Illus. by Vera Stone Norman. Sanborn, 1939.



*Breakfast with the Clowns.* By Rosalie Slocum. Viking.

Real circus is followed by the play Circus. Includes riddles.

*Copy-Kitten.* By Helen Evers. Rand McNally, c.1937.

Copy-kitten goes to a circus and attempts to copy some of the circus animals.

*Happy Birthday.* By Zhenya Gay. Viking, 1939.

On May day school children give a circus party for their teacher on the village green. A gay and happy birthday party.

*Ki-Ki, A Circus Trooper.* Pictures by Kurt Weise. Albert Whitman, 1937.

Ki-Ki, a little Pomeranian dog, becomes a circus performer. Easy reading for young children.

*Mei Li.* By Thomas Handforth. Doubleday, 1938.

Mei Li, a little Chinese girl, sees the circus at the New Year Fair. Excellent illustrations.

*A Roundabout Turn.* By Leslie Brooke and Robert Charles. Warne, 1930.

A toad who lived on Albury Heath goes to the circus and discovers the world is round.

*This Way to the Circus.* By Emilia Hodel and Franz Bergmann. Junior Literary Guild, 1938.

A little boy goes to the circus with his mother, gets lost, finds a yellow puppy dog and adventures. Pictures in gay colors.

*Three Circus Days.* By Edna Turpin. Il. by George and Doris Hauman. Macmillan, 1935.

On the first day the Brown family sees the circus field as the circus arrives; the second day they see the show and the third day they give a home-made circus in their own back yard.

*The Story of a Seal Who Joined the Circus.* By Berta Hader and Elmer Toolsy Hader. Longmans, 1931.

Pictures in color. He does all sorts of tricks.

*Wait for William.* By Marjorie Flack. Houghton, 1936.

William has a ride on the elephant.

### STORIES

*The Adventures of Peter Whiffen.* By E. L. Meadowcroft. Crowell, 1936.

Peter Whiffen and Mr. Duckit participate in a real home-made circus.

*Alice-Herbert Elephant.* By Marjorie Hayes, il. by Kurt Wiese. Little, 1938.

Larry and his sister imagined a pigmy elephant like the one at the circus. They named it Alice-Herbert. A convincing imaginary elephant.

*\*Big Tent.* By Dorothy Canfield Fisher. Harcourt.

Two orphans visit the circus.

*Chinky Joins the Circus.* By Sanford Tousey. Doubleday, 1938.

Chinky, the pet Banker pony, runs away from his Connecticut home. One of his exciting adventures is a circus performance.

*The Circus Boat.* By John Hooper. Stephen Daye, 1939.

A tale of a circus at sea.

*\*Circus Boy.* By Harriet F. Bunn; il. by G. M. Richards. Macmillan, 1936.

Courage, bravery and adventure enter into the life of Tim who was born in a circus wagon.

*\*Circus Shoes.* By Noel Streatfield; il. by Richard Floethe. Random House, 1939.

Peter and Santa were orphans. When they found their uncle Gus, life with the circus began. Summer tenting with Uncle Gus held

\*For older boys and girls.

glamor and thrills. Beautiful three-color wash drawings. This book won the Book Clinic honor for August, 1939. For older boys and girls.

*Crazy Quilt.* By Paul Brown. Scribner, 1934.  
Black and white drawings with a story of a circus pony.

*Crickets.* By Berta and Elmer Hader. Macmillan, 1938.

A lively little pony becomes a professional performer.

*\*Dapples of the Circus.* By Clarence Hawkes. Lothrop, 1923.

A Shetland pony has a career in the circus with his young master, "Freckles." Contains much circus information. For older boys and girls.

*Doctor Dolittle's Circus.* By Hugh Lofting. Stokes, 1924.

The renowned Doctor joins a circus.

*Fairy Circus.* By Dorothy Lathrop. Macmillan, 1931.

Drawings in color supplement the circus stories of elfin creatures.

*Fortune's Caravan.* By Lilly Javal; adapted by Rachel Field from the tr. by Marion Saunders; il. by Maggie Salcedo. Morrow, 1933.

A French family performs at village fairs.

*The Great Geppy.* By William Pene DuBois. Viking, 1940.

The Great Geppy is an unusual red and white striped horse and a circus detective. An exciting mystery story for all ages.

*\*Hepatica Hawks.* By Rachel Field; il. by Allen Lewis. Macmillan, 1932.

Interesting story of a young girl with a traveling show of the nineties.

*Mr. Tidy Paws.* By Frances Clarke Sayers; il. by Zhenya Gay. Viking, 1935.

A black cat joins a dog and pony show.

*The Pet Elephant.* By James Hull. Macmillan, 1932.

A circus elephant is purchased in an unusual way by two children.

*Powder.* By Esther Averill; il. by Fedor Rokovskiy. Random House, 1933.

"The story of a colt, a duchess and the circus." Distinguished illustrations add to the gay story.

*Scotch Circus.* By Tom Powers; il. by Lois Lenski. Houghton, 1934.

"The story of Tammas who rode the dragon."

*\*Road to Adventure.* By M. G. Bruce. Minton, 1933.

A circus story about Australia.

*Spunky.* By Berta and Elmer Hader. Macmillan, 1933.

A spirited pony wins a race.

*The Story of Freginald.* By W. R. Brooks; il. by Kurt Wiese. Knopf, 1936.

An exciting tale of a bear who joins the circus and has extraordinary adventures.

*3 Rings.* By Paul Brown. Scribner, 1938.

Two gaily painted cars and trailers carry the Perkins family right into circus life. The Perkins children have an exciting time with their clown father.



*Here Comes the Circus.* By Horace S. Moses. Illus. by Suzanne Suba. Houghton Mifflin.

*Toby Tyler.* By James Kaler. Harper, 1930.

"Ten weeks with a circus." For years this has been a popular tale of a boy who found the circus and Mr. Stubbs.

*Trixie.* By Bob Barton; il. by C. Walter Hodges. Dutton.

A famous orang-outang who travelled with the people of the circus.

#### STORIES IN OTHER BOOKS

"The Circus." In *Till Potatoes Grow on Trees.* By Emma Brock. Knopf, 1938.

Mary lost her quarter before she bought a circus ticket but she gets into the circus. Good story to tell "about the finest show on earth."

"Circuses Are Fun." In *B Is For Betsy.* By Carolyn Haywood. Harcourt, 1939.



A charming tale of an amateur circus in the school room.

"The Circus Comes." In *Nicholas*. By Anne Carroll Moore. Putnam, 1924.

The circus comes to New York City in Madison Square Garden.

"Dolly Joins the Circus." In *Best Short Stories for Children*, first collection. By C. R. Brink. Row, 1935.

Dolly, a big white horse, joins the circus parade and becomes an entertainer.

"From the Little Yellow House (It Happened on Circus Day)." In *Ladies and Gentlemen Said the Ringmaster*. By John Kahn. Knopf, 1938.

Jean, Jerry and Mary visit the circus with Uncle Tommy. Clowns, bands, waltzing horses and the most "charming dancer in the world."

"When the Circus Comes. In *What Happened to Inger Johanne*. By Dikken Zwiig-meyer. Lothrop, 1923.

Circus riders keep their horses in the barns at Inger Johanne's home.

#### ALL SIDES OF THE CIRCUS

"Acrobats." In *Careers of Danger and Darling*. By Cleveland Moffett. Appleton-Century, 1901.

Courage and bravery of acrobats.

*Circus; Men, Beasts, Joys of the Road*. By Paul Eipper; tr. by F. H. Martens. Viking, 1931.

The author roamed through Europe with a circus. 47 photographs.

*Circus Menagerie*. By E. P. Norwood. Doubleday, 1929.

The ways of circus animals.

*Elephants*. By W. W. Robinson; il. by I. B. Robinson. Harper, 1935.

Lively drawings and authentic text.

*Here Comes the Circus*. By Horace S. Moses. Illus. by Susanne Suba. Houghton Mifflin, 1941.

Factual material written in a very readable form for children. The detailed information about backstage activities is related in a manner which makes the book read like an exciting story for young people. Contents: The day before circus day; The trains; The horses; The lot; The cook house; The big top; The menagerie; The back yard; The elephants; The midway; Circus people; The performance begins.

*Jules Tunour. Autobiography of a Clown*, as told to Isaac F. Marcossou; il. by Mary Ponton Gardner. Dodd, 1931.

"To the children who love the clowns." A clever French clown reveals the person inside the make-up.

*Lions*. By W. W. Robinson; il. by Irene Robinson. Harper, 1936.

Sixteen dramatic pictures with exciting stories.

*Lions 'n' Tigers 'n' Everything*. By Courtney Ryley Cooper. new ed. Little, 1936.

The care and training of circus animals.

*My Circus Animals*. By V. L. Durov, tr. from the Russian by John Cournos; il. by Ronald W. Murray. Houghton, 1936.

Story by a famous clown and animal trainer. He gives in detail methods of animal training.

*Other Side of the Circus*. By Edwin P. Norwood. Doubleday, 1926.

Everyday life in the circus.

*Here Comes Barnum*. By Helen Ferris. Harcourt, 1932.

"P. T. Barnum's own story collected from his books and introduced by Helen Ferris."

*Training of Wild Animals*. By Frank Charles Bostock. Appleton-Century, 1903.

Written by a famous animal trainer.

*When the Circus Comes to Town*. Compton's Pictured Encyclopedia. F. E. Compton, 1939. v.3, Circus.

Excellent historical sketch with numerous illustrations.

#### FOR THE TEACHER

*Amateur Circus Life*. By Ernest Berkeley Balch. Macmillan, 1916.

Based on acrobats for professionals. Gives clear instructions.

"Bookland Circus." In *Book and Library Plays for Elementary and High School Use*. By Edith M. Phelps, ed. H. W. Wilson, 1939.

A Book Week play in two short scenes.

*Circus*. By Bertha Bennet Burleigh. Putnam, 1938.

Discusses the circus in various countries. Excellent illustrations to use with children.

*Circus*. By Klara E. Knecht. Saalfeld, 1934.

Photographs of the circus in action.

*The Circus Comes to School*. B. Averil Tibbels. Barnes, 1937.

# Keeping Up With Children's Literature

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KNOWLEDGE of the sources of contemporary children's literature is indispensable to the progressive, alert, and opportunity-minded teacher. A unit devoted to the exploration of this area in a children's literature course will provide the teacher with the necessary materials from which she can draw to round out a stimulating reading program. While the retention of much of the usual, older material is highly desirable, the teacher should not lose sight of the many unusually good current books, many of which children delight in reading. Direction to help the teacher find reputable agencies which distribute better books is fully as important as direction to guide children to worthwhile books. This thought prompted us to gather the information which could be presented particularly to teachers in a children's literature course. In order to make a significant contribution to her knowledge of children's literature, the teacher should be acquainted with the distributing centers and people who hold a high place in the hierarchy of contemporary literature for children.

Eleven years ago an excellent plan to bring children outstandingly good books was formulated. This plan is the basis of the Junior Literary Guild. For each of four age groups there is selected every month a book chosen from the many

published. The benefits claimed by the Junior Literary Guild are not only discrimination and careful selection by experts, but also economy.

The editorial board is made up of Helen Ferris, who is editor-in-chief; Mrs. Sidonie Gruenberg, Angelo Patri, and Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt—all of whom have substantial backgrounds for this kind of work, for they know and understand children. Outstanding educators who work daily with children have expressed enthusiasm for the plan.

The editors are careful to select books best suited to the age group for which they are intended. An outstanding feature of the subject matter of the books is the authenticity. The authors selected go to considerable trouble to get true historical perspective through painstaking research. Consequently, the books are attractive for the incidental contribution which they make to the general curriculum.

Connected with, and growing out of the plan is the magazine *Young Wings*, in which authors and illustrators of children's books address articles to young readers. Teachers who use *Young Wings* express considerable pleasure because of the many fine pieces of writing which it contains.

Those who wish to investigate the plan

further will find an interesting account of its purposes and results in *To Enrich Young Life*, by Helen Ferris.

Of considerable interest are the Newbery Medal Books, named in honor of John Newbery, a bookseller of the eighteenth century who has been called by some people "The Father of Children's Literature." The Newbery Medal is awarded annually by Frederic Melcher, Editor of *The Publishers' Weekly*, "for the most distinguished book for children written by a citizen or resident of the United States and published during the preceding year." The book is chosen by the Children's Librarians' Section of the American Library Association. The purpose, plan, and historical background of the Newbery Medal Books and discussions of authors of the Newbery Books, of the subject matter of the books, of their illustrators, and of children's reactions to them are interestingly presented in a pamphlet entitled *The Newbery Medal Books, 1922-1933* by Muriel E. Cann. Following is a list of the Newbery Medal Books up to the present.

YEAR	TITLE	AUTHOR
1922	The Story of Man-kind	Hendrik Willem Van Loon
1923	The Voyages of Doctor Dolittle	Hugh Lofting
1924	The Dark Frigate	Charles Boardman Hawes
1925	Tales From Silver Lands	Charles Joseph Finger
1926	Shen of the Sea	Arthur Bowie Chrisman
1927	Smoky, the Cow-horse	Will James
1929	Gay-neck	Dhan Gopal Mukerji
1930	Hitty	Rachel Field
1931	The Cat Who Went to Heaven	Elizabeth Coatsworth
1932	Waterless Mountain	Laura Adams Armer
1933	Young Fu of the Upper Yangtze	Elizabeth Foreman Lewis
1934	Invincible Louisa (Louisa M. Alcott)	Cornelia L. Meigs
1935	Dobry	Monica Shannon
1936	Caddie Woodlawn	Carol Ryrie Brink
1937	Roller Skates	Ruth Sawyer
1938	White Stag	Kate Seredy
1939	Thimble Summer	Ruth Enright
1940	Daniel Boone	James Daugherty

Teachers should be informed of a new award, the Randolph Caldecott Award, which is presented annually by Mr. Melcher to the artist of the most distinguished picture book for children published during the year. The fact that the judges, in making the award, consider "the harmony of conscious design, holding together text, illustrations and all departments and details of mechanical production" should be of considerable interest. Here we see that illustrations, becoming an integral part of books, should enhance the enjoyment a child experiences as he reads the book. The first award was made in 1938. The three awards thus far made are as follows:

1938	Animals of the Bible	Dorothy P. Lathrop
1939	Mei Li	Thomas Handforth
1940	Abraham Lincoln	Edgar and Ingri D'Aulaire

The New York *Herald-Tribune* has sponsored for several years The Children's Spring Book Festival, an experience which is stimulating and encourages an interest in children's books. Mrs. May Lamberton Becker, editor of children's books for the New York *Herald-Tribune*, is responsible for the initiation of this program, which was held first in 1937.

*The Publishers' Weekly*, the American book trade journal, frequently devotes a large part of a single issue to a discussion of children's books and other items of interest to people concerned with children's reading interests. Of special note are the sketches of children's book editors, employed by leading publishers, a group of people with whom teachers would do well to get acquainted. These sketches, which are written by Muriel Fuller, present the background and experiences of these interesting personalities. Outstanding editors are portrayed in the following issues of this publication:



Helen Dean Fish	Aug. 31, 1935	CXXVIII, 9
Elizabeth Bevier Hamilton	Sept. 28, 1935	CXXVIII, 13
Bertha L. Gunterman	Oct. 19, 1935	CXXVIII, 16
Elizabeth L. Gilman	Dec. 14, 1935	CXXVIII, 24
Dorothy Bryan	Feb. 8, 1936	CXXIX, 6
Grace Allen	Mar. 21, 1936	CXXIX, 12
Laura Harris	April 18, 1936	CXXIX, 16
Eunice P. Blake	July 4, 1936	CXXX, 1
Margaret Lesser	Aug. 28, 1936	CXXX, 6
Doris S. Patee	Aug. 29, 1936	CXXX, 9
Louise Raymond	Oct. 17, 1936	CXXX, 16
Dorothy Waugh	April 29, 1939	CXXXV, 17
Louise Bonino	Oct. 28, 1939	CXXXVI, 18

While a thorough perusal of this material is desirable, it is not necessary. It seems to me that teachers should strike up an acquaintance with some of the people who are responsible for the kinds of literature and illustrations in books for children.

*The Horn Book Magazine* offers a wealth of excellent and stimulating reading to those who are interested in children's literature. This periodical contains not only articles on literature but also literature for children. Consequently, the teacher may use it to bring to children appropriate short pieces of literature that might otherwise be unobtainable. Leafing through the issues, one finds stories, poems, plays, editorials, articles on books and literary topics, and other good materials. An excellent idea incorporated in this magazine is a title index, an author index, and a complete list of books, authors, and illustrators mentioned during a year of publication—all of which are contained in the final issue of the year.

The teacher should not overlook the valuable articles contained in *The Elementary English Review*. The articles in this magazine are informational rather than inspirational. If one wishes to keep abreast of the times in the area of investigations in the field of children's literature, she should keep in touch with *The Elementary English Review*.

Children's Book Week, which occurs throughout the nation once a year in the fall, is especially a time when a teacher's

eyes and ears should be open for literary news. Assembly programs celebrate the occasion; posters announce librarian conferences and parent-teacher celebrations; bookstores and publishers publicize the event. Teachers who are seriously interested in fostering growth and progress in the reading interests of children will seize the many opportunities which the celebration offers to reorient themselves in the field of children's literature and to make firmer desirable reading habits and interests.

*Story Parade*, which has as its subtitle, "A Magazine for Boys and Girls," offers considerable fresh and interesting literature written both by adults who are specialists in children's literature and by children themselves. It is sponsored by the Association for Arts in Childhood, Inc., a group which "fosters appreciation of the arts among children and expression in them by children." Lest the quality of the literature be misjudged, I wish to state that here is no condescension to children. The stories, poems, plays, and book reviews are, first of all, good literature. As for the illustrations, I have found no better in magazines of this kind. It is a magazine that children themselves can look into and handle.

There are some good things for children to be found in *Child Life*, a magazine which, for the most part, would appeal to older children. There are two types of print—large for the younger children and small for the older. The illustrations are apropos of their subjects, and very well done. The photographs of subjects of interest to children are attractive, too.

*American Childhood*, another magazine, has fine subject matter to which teachers may refer for stimulating material. It is addressed to teachers prim-



# Problems In Primary Book Selection

## IV. The Selection Of First And Second Readers\*

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THIS IS the fourth and concluding article of a series in which standards have been offered for use in the selection of primary readers. Ways of evaluating the vocabulary, physical makeup, adaptation to instructional and learning needs and other textbook characteristics were described. Specific standards were given for the rating of pre-primers (4),<sup>1</sup> supplementary pre-primers (5), primers and supplementary primers (6).

In this article, standards will be offered for the rating of first and second readers as to vocabulary. The standards for physical makeup, adaptation to instructional and learning needs, general organization and miscellaneous are identical with those offered in the preceding articles for use in the rating of pre-primers and primers. These sections were described in detail in an earlier article (4) and need not be explained again here.

The vocabulary characteristics of the average first reader may be summarized briefly. It has a total of about 8,700 running words composed of 565 different words. Thus each word is repeated, on the average, 15 times. Words are introduced at the rate of 3.2 per page. Fifty-two per cent of these different words are repeated at least six times somewhere in the first reader. Sixty-five per cent of the words may be found in the first 500 words of the Gates list (1) and 92 per cent somewhere in the entire Gates list.

<sup>1</sup> Parenthetical figures refer to items in the Bibliography. See page 181.

Ninety-one per cent of the primer vocabulary is repeated.

Hockett has pointed out (2,3) the definite trend toward a lesser number of different words in first readers of more recent publication. The average number of different words for 13 books published in 1920-29 was 645. For 15 books of 1930-35, the average number of words was 540. This is certainly a trend in a desirable direction if one believes that the use of more simple beginning books results in fewer reading failures, greater speed and ease in learning to read and more intrinsic interest in reading. It is superfluous to note that the tonic of success is as exhilarating in beginning reading as in other fields of human endeavor.

The score card for vocabulary of first readers from which this summary was made is reproduced here. In this score card, the term "Norm" indicates the average of a large number of first readers; "Inferior," the more difficult and less desirable books; "Average," books of moderate difficulty and "Superior," the more simple and more desirable books.

The standards were derived as follows.

1. Total number of words. The average first reader of the 37 studied by Hockett (2) contained 8698 running words. The middle 51 per cent or average books ranged from 7158 to 9679 words. All other things being equal, the longer

\*This is the concluding article of a series offering standards for use in the selection of primary books. The preceding articles have offered standards for the choice of pre-primers, supplementary pre-primers, primers and supplementary primers.

## THE ELEMENTARY ENGLISH REVIEW

SCORE CARD FOR THE SELECTION OF FIRST READERS  
VOCABULARY

	Norm	Inferior	Average	Superior
1. Total number of words	8698	Below 7158	7158-9679	Above 9679
2. Number of different words	565	Above 645	485-645	Below 485
3. Average repetition	15	Below 13	13-18	Above 18
4. Number of new words per page	3.2	Above 4.3	2.6-4.3	Below 2.6
5. Per cent of words repeated six times or more each	52	Below 46	46-65	Above 65
6. Per cent of standard vocabulary	92	Below 91	91-93	Above 93
7. Per cent of primer words	91	Below 83	83-97	Above 97

books are more desirable if they provide sufficient repetition of the basal vocabulary. If similar in vocabulary to the basal reader, the shorter books are preferable for supplementary reading. Because of their size, the longer books repeat their basal vocabulary more frequently than the smaller and shorter books. Therefore, first readers of less than 7158 running words are judged "Inferior" in this item. Those greater than 9679 words with a repetition of more than the average amount, 15, are to be rated "Superior." Those with more than 9679 words, with an average repetition of less than 15, are to be rated as "Average" books. It will be necessary to apply the standard of item 3, Average Repetition, before this first standard can be applied to books larger than 9679 running words. It will not be necessary for the person using the score card to count the total number of words in each book, since the figures for a number of commonly used first readers are given by Hockett (2).

2. Number of different words. The average number of different words in Hockett's 37 first readers (2) was 565. "Average" books ranged from 485 to 645. Those with less than 485 different words are among the more simple, "Superior" books. Those above 645 are to be rated "Inferior" because of their greater than average difficulty. Hockett (2) gives the number of different words for the entire group of books upon which this standard is based.

3. Average repetition. Dividing the standard for the total number of words, 8698, by the standard for number of different words, 565, gives an average repetition of 15.3. In other words, the average word in the average first reader is repeated 15 times. Hockett's report (2) based on 37 first readers gives an average repetition of 15.2. Books of "Average" difficulty range from 12.9 to 18.0. First readers in which the average word is repeated less than 12.9 times are certainly "Inferior." Those with average repetition above 18 are to be rated "Superior." The average repetition may be determined for any reader by dividing the total words by the number of different words.

4. Number of new words per page. Dividing the number of different words by the number of pages on which reading material for the child is present, tells the number of words introduced per page. In the group of 27 first readers studied in the course of writing this article, words were introduced at the rate of 3.2 per page in the average book. The middle 50 per cent of "Average" books ranged from 2.6 to 4.3. Therefore, those that introduce words at a faster rate than 4.3 per page are to be judged "Inferior" to their fellows in this characteristic. Those introducing words at less than 2.6 per page are "Superior."

5. Per cent of words repeated six times each or more. It is not known how frequently words must be repeated in a

reader in order that they be remembered. But words repeated less than six times each in the entire book are not apt to be remembered, in all probability. Hockett (2) gives the per cent of words that are repeated six times each or more in 37 first readers. The middle 51 per cent of these books, or those of "Average" difficulty, repeated from 46 to 65 per cent of their words six times each. First readers in which more than 65 per cent of the words are repeated six times or more each are certainly "Superior."

6. Per cent of standard vocabulary. Hockett (2) found that 92 per cent of the vocabulary of the average first reader may be found in the Gates list (1). If one believes that the use of a standard vocabulary is desirable in beginning books, this figure may be used as a standard for judging a book's vocabulary. According to Hockett's figures, books in which more than 93 per cent of the vocabulary is chosen from the Gates list are "Superior." Those with less than 91 per cent of a standard vocabulary such as the Gates list or that of Stone (7) are "Inferior." This standard may appear somewhat drastic, but it is certainly not unfair. It is apparent that three-fourths of the 37 first readers studied by Hockett had 91 per cent or more of a standard vocabulary. If it is such a common practice to have a very large percentage of the vocabulary of a first reader drawn from a standard list, the criterion used here is not too severe.

7. Per cent of primer words repeated. The extent to which the primer vocabulary is repeated in the first reader was determined for 22 first readers. The average first reader was found to contain 91 per cent of the primer vocabulary. The middle half of the books ranged from 83.5 to 97.2 per cent. With ideal integration of the primer and first reader,

all of the primer words would be repeated in the first reader. Apparently present practices are quite close to this ideal. Only 9 per cent of the words of the average primer, or about 25 words, are lost in the transition to the first reader of the same series. To promote economical use of the teacher's time, it would seem fair to demand that the authors of a primer inform the teacher of words that need not be stressed in the reading of the primer since they are to be discarded later.

To illustrate the use of the vocabulary section of the Score Card for the Selection of First Readers, figures are given here for a number of the more commonly used books. Beneath the numerical data giving the total number of words, etc., is the rating of this item in terms of the standards given in the score card. "S" signifies a "Superior" rating, "A" denotes "Average," and "I," "Inferior." These ratings may be combined into a "Total Value" of the book by giving arbitrary values to the different ratings. If a "Superior" rating in any vocabulary characteristic is worth 3 points; an "Average" rating, two points and an "Inferior," one point, the ratings may be added and a "Total Value" of the book expressed as this sum.

This "Total Value" of each first reader is given in the last column of the table. A book receiving "Average" rating in all vocabulary characteristics would, according to this weighting of ratings, receive a Total Value of 14. Therefore, first readers with Total Values above 14 are the less difficult books and those of greater desirability in terms of vocabulary characteristics. Books with Total Values of less than 14 are the inferior, more difficult books.

The score card for the rating of the vocabulary of second readers is given

## THE ELEMENTARY ENGLISH REVIEW

Score Card for the Selection of First Readers

	Total words	Number different words	Average repetition	New words per page	Percent words six times each	Percent standard vocabulary	Percent primer vocabulary	Total value
Bobbs-Merrill - Bobbs-Merrill	8444 A	471 S	17.9 A	2.8 A	41 I	92 A	87 A	14
Friends in Town & Country	9020 A	377 S	23.9 S	1.9 S	73 S	90 I	81 I	16
Curriculum-Bobbs-Merrill	11577 A	645 S	17.9 A	3.1 A	58 A	89 I	85 A	13
True Story - Bobbs-Merrill	7154 I	906 I	7.8 I	4.9 I			82 I	
Smedley-Olsen-Revised	8698 A	297 S	29.3 S	1.6 S	72 S	76 I	44 I	16
Hall McCreary	8708 A	486 S	17.9 A	2.9 A	65 S	52 I	90 A	13
Sniff - Our Animal Books	10069 S	481 S	20.9 S	2.7 A	84 S	83 I	99 S	18
Heath	7158 A	658 I	10.9 I	4.8 I	41 I	52 I	17 I	8
Everyday Friends - Child Development-Houghton Mifflin	8244 A	542 A	15.2 A	4.4 I	51 A	66 I	89 A	12
Good Friends - Happy Hour Johnson	10345 I	795 I	13.0 A	4.9 I	42 I	35 I	99 S	10
Friends to Make - Story & Study - Johnson	10359 S	470 S	22.0 S	2.3 S	65 A	59 I	96 A	17
Laidlaw - Laidlaw Bros.	10882 S	487 S	22.3 S	3.0 A	75 S	63 I	94 A	16
Lincoln - Laurel Book	6223 I	331 S	18.8 S	2.5 S	73 S	58 I	97 A	16
Round About - Alice & Jerry Row, Peterson	5193 I	403 S	12.9 I	3.4 A	51 A	78 I	89 A	12
Elson Basic - Scott, Foresman	6430 I	572 A	11.2 I	6.7 I	41 I	79 I	71 I	8
David's Friends at School	6894 I	584 A	11.8 I	6.8 I	40 I	67 I	87 A	9
Scott, Foresman	4942 I	465 S	10.6 I	3.0 A	44 I	46 I	99 S	12
At Home - Real Life Scribner's	7743 A	607 A	12.7 I	4.2 A	46 A	52 I	99 S	13
Surprise Stories - Child's Own Way - Wheeler								
Surprise Stories Revised								
Wheeler								
Everyday Life - Winston								
Growing Up - New Silent Winston								



below. The standards it proposes may be summarized briefly. The average second reader has a total of about 21,000 running words. These are composed of approximately 1000 words. Thus the average word is repeated 20 times. Words are introduced at the rate of about 4.2 per page. Eighty-six per cent of the vocabulary of the book may be found somewhere in the Gates list; 88% of first reader words are present.

The standards of the section on Vocabulary were derived as follows.

1. Total number of words. Hockett (2) found that the average second reader among the 28 he studied contained 20,968 running words. The middle 51 per cent or "Average" books ranged from 17,697 to 22,427 words. Books of more than 22,427 words, with average repetition of their vocabulary equal to the average book, are to be preferred to the shorter books. Thus second readers of more than 22,427 words with an average repetition of more than 19 are "Superior" books. Those with less than 17,697 words are "Inferior."

2. Number of different words. According to Hockett (2), the average second reader has 1022 different words. "Average" books ranged from 921 to 1149. Those above 1149 are rated "Inferior" because of their greater difficulty. Those with less than 921 are to be considered "Superior."

3. Average repetition. Dividing the average number of words, 20,968, by the average number of different words, 1022,

gives an average repetition of 20.4. Hockett (2) found that the average second reader repeated each word 19.4 times. Books of "Average" difficulty ranged from 16.8 to 22.5. Those in which the average repetition is greater than 22.5 are "Superior" in this characteristic. Those with average repetition below 16.8 are "Inferior."

4. Number of new words per page. Dividing the number of different words by the number of pages of reading intended for the child, gives the rate of introduction of new words per page. The writer has compiled figures for 20 second readers. In the median book, words are introduced at the rate of 4.2 per page. "Average" second readers introduce from 3.6 to 5.1 words per page. Second readers that introduce more than 5 new words per page are rated "Inferior" in this vocabulary characteristic.

5. Per cent of standard vocabulary. Hockett (2) reports that 86 per cent of the vocabulary of the average second reader may be found in the Gates Primary Vocabulary (1). Books that make a moderate use of the Gates list range from 83 to 89 per cent. Using these figures as a standard, second readers in which less than 83 per cent of the vocabulary is derived from such a standard list as the Gates or Stone (7) compilations are "Inferior" in the nature of their vocabulary.

6. Per cent of first reader words. The per cent of first reader words repeated in second readers of the same series was de-

SCORE CARD FOR THE SELECTION OF SECOND READERS  
VOCABULARY

	Norm	Inferior	Average	Superior
1. Total number of words	20968	Below 17697	17697-22427	Above 22427
2. Number of different words	1022	Above 1149	921-1149	Below 921
3. Average repetition	19	Below 16.8	16.8-22.5	Above 22.5
4. Number of new words per page	4.2	Above 5.1	3.6-5.1	Below 3.6
5. Percent of standard vocabulary	86	Below 83	83-89	Above 89
6. Per cent of first reader words	88	Below 81	81-94	Above 94

## THE ELEMENTARY ENGLISH REVIEW

Score Card for the Selection of Second Readers

	Total words	Number different words	Average repetition	Number per page	Percent standard vocabulary	Percent first reader vocabulary	Total Value
Bobbs-Merrill - Bobbs - Merrill	18801 A	969 A	19.4 A	4.0 A	81 I	75 I	10
Friends Here & Away - Curriculum-Bobbs-Merrill	20888 A	819 S	25.5 S	3.0 S	88 A	90 A	15
Smedley-Olsen - Hall McCreary	12276 I	853 S	14.4 I	4.6 A	90 S	62 I	11
Wheels & Wing - Happy Hour - Johnson	20981 A	934 A	22.5 A	4.0 A	92 S	97 S	14
Trips to Take - Story & Study - Johnson	21996 A	1283 I	17.1 A	6.1 I	86 A	99 S	11
Laidlaw - Laidlaw Bros.	16853 I	1159 I	14.5 I	5.8 I	85 A	93 A	8
Friendly Village - Alice & Jerry - Row, Peterson	23525 S	796 S	29.6 S	3.3 S	90 S	87 A	17
Elson Basic - Scott, Foresman	22545 S	908 S	24.8 S	3.8 A	93 S	89 A	16
Susan's Neighbors - Social Studies - Scott, Foresman	19657 A	548 S	35.9 S	2.4 S	84 A	88 A	15
Stories for Every Day - Childhood - Scribner's	16987 I	958 A	17.7 A	3.7 A	89 A	82 A	11
Tales & Travels - Real Life Scribner's	9913 I	765 S	13.0 I	5.1 A	86 A	74 I	10
Round About You - Unit Act- ivity - Silver, Burdett	23050 S	884 S	26.1 S	3.8 A	86 A	96 S	16
We Grow Up - New Work-Play Macmillan	22851 S	803 S	28.4 S	3.3 S	95+ S	87 A	17

terminated for 14 books. The average second reader contains 88 per cent of the vocabulary of the preceding book. The middle half of the second readers range from 81 to 94.1 per cent. It appears that approximately 12 per cent of the vocabulary of the first reader is lost in the transition to the second book of the same series. Certainly some notice of this waste of about 67 words, perhaps in the form of a list of them, should be given to the first grade teacher in order that she may not emphasize these words.

As an example of the use of the vocabulary section of the Score Card for the Selection of Second Readers, figures are given here for a number of books. Each book is rated in each vocabulary item and these ratings combined into a Total Value noted in the last column. Each rating of "Superior" is given a value of 3 points in the Total Value column. "Average" and "Inferior" ratings are two points and one point respectively.

A book receiving "Average" ratings in all of the vocabulary items would have a Total Value of 12 according to this method of weighting the ratings. Second readers with Total Value above 12 are,

of course, the less difficult and more desirable books in terms of their vocabulary characteristics. Those with Total Value below 12 are the more difficult, less desirable second readers.

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# Our Plastic Language\*

## A Basis for Literary Craftsmanship

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(Continued from April)

Yes, a recognition of language as a plastic medium opens an infinite scope of experimentation. In addition to making possible the variations we have noted, it provides a way for us to break up certain annoying, ubiquitous "word-gangs," such as trite phrases, bromides, and weak passives. Through it we may replace abstract, colorless phrases with concrete nouns, adjectives, and adverbs, and with action (one is tempted to call them concrete) verbs. Entering more controversial techniques, it enables us to end sentences with prepositions (or to recast the sentences and avoid the prepositions); to remodel passages so as to avoid splitting infinitives needlessly (or to go courageously ahead, splitting them when no other phrasings are more graceful); or to open sentences with *and*, against which a curious inhibition prevails in many scholastic circles.

It gives pupils and teachers something tangible to talk about when discussing verse or prose, and especially prose. This is really a great and practical service. If you don't believe this, listen to discussions on prose style by people who apparently have never become conscious of linguistic craftsmanship. Or ask some students; equally unaware of this craftsmanship, to comment on a passage of prose *as prose*, insisting that they avoid discussing the subject matter of the passage, except for a consideration of whether or not the particular pattern of prose used is a suitable

vehicle for the thought conveyed. Especially request the students, for present purposes, to avoid casting up the characteristic smoke-screen outburst of paragraphs about "what the piece means to me" (a legitimate activity at its time and place, but usually having nothing whatever to do with an understanding of literary craftsmanship) to hide their ignorance of how words can be put together. Students are baffled; results are vague; nobody can think of anything specific to say. And this, in spite of the fact that our boys and girls have been *speaking* language ever since their infancy, *writing* it since first or second grade, and *hearing* it spoken all their lives! Taking language usage so much for granted, they know nothing about it, as *a medium of expression*. "Oh, I've been putting words together for ten years!" they would say, perhaps implying that their innate skill has served them reasonably well for a decade. Be that as it may, many of them have a much more practical grasp of how bicycles are made, how assembled, and how repaired! And you may have discovered that pupils who have studied music for one year, manual arts for a half year, or fine art for one semester are able to make more intelligent critical observations on a piece of music, a bookcase, or a painting than on a page of prose composed in a medium they have worked with for more than a decade. The counter-assertion that, in spite of their meager critical comments they, after all, are more at ease when

\*Read before the Elementary Section of the National Council of Teachers of English, November 23, 1940, in Chicago, Illinois.



using language than when working with notes, saw and lathe, or brush and palette, is no real answer to the challenge.

"Oh," someone says, "but you would take all the romance out of writing. This sounds like arithmetic or algebra or, worse still, like a slot machine or nickelodeon; so much of this, so much of that and, behold, we have a fine piece of writing—or at least a page that can be analyzed nicely. Where does *inspiration* come in?"

With you I need not labor an answer to this. Language-patterns that are flexible and streamlined provide channels for "inspiration" to exert itself—to become articulate without impediment or friction. Behind all good writing lies good thinking; but behind all good writing lies, also, *good writing*. Strong thinking does not guarantee strong writing when the writer is unfamiliar with effective forms of expression. Every art has a mechanical basis. Would-be craftsmen need an introduction to their medium; there is no guarantee that writers arrive at their best phrasal patterns instinctively. A potential sonneteer might be stirred by thousands of sonnet-worthy inspirations, yet almost certainly never compose in sonnets (thereby enhancing his inspirations with the sonnet's peculiar power) unless sometime introduced to the sonnet form.

Literary "inspiration," if it is not to be half wasted, must work in two directions: it should activate mental or emotional quivers in the writer, and, through that writer's product (which corresponds to a phonograph record) generate comparable mental or emotional quivers in the reader or hearer. Accomplishment of the latter depends on the *how* as well as the *what* of writing. The author's pattern of expression becomes the reader's way of thinking. Editorial offices all over the country are crammed with manuscripts

from contributors who had the "inspiration" but not the mechanics.

Yet one more benefit may derive from having pupils deliberately, consciously play with our plastic language. A knowledge of ways of expression *will suggest* ways of thinking. This is the reverse of the much-talked-of (and dominant) good thinking-good writing sequence. Familiarity with stimulating phrasal patterns tends to induce vigorous thinking. And just as a motorist, entering a town after miles of uneventful straight-away, is aroused by complications of traffic, so a writer, having opened his sentence with inverted or suspended structure, is challenged to carry the statement through safely, even with *éclat*. Yes, a way of presentation is a way of *thinking* and, I am tempted to add, a way of *feeling*.

Pupil experiences with language as a medium need not lead to "over-writing." On the contrary, a person having a feeling for permutations and combinations of words can write all the more unaffectedly and unobtrusively because his flexible style conforms smoothly to the patterns of conversation and sequential thinking. A writer need not start all his sentences alike in order to be simple, nor must he be monotonous to be plain. He may give full play to his feeling for his medium and yet remember that epigrammatic warning against needless ornament: "Style is the feather in the arrow, not the feather in the cap."

To the teacher, from elementary grades to college, this craftsmanship approach is both refreshing and comforting; refreshing because it gives her, too, a chance to keep alert and growing through manipulating an artistic medium with a craftsman's attitude; comforting because it provides tangible methods of approaching the problems of student ex-

pression. It offers one of the quickest ways whereby a teacher may make herself dispensable. Students can check for themselves, for instance, without the teacher's aid, by reading the opening words of their successive sentences and (in advanced grades) of their successive paragraphs. Variation in sentence length, too, is easily tested. And in the earliest grades, boys and girls can experience the truth that a statement of two, three, or four words may be arranged in more than one way. This can become a jolly game, with parallels in art and music. Nor need a teacher fear that this breaking up of the dominant article-subject-verb pattern will confuse young children into speaking all sorts of queer word combinations; the children's years of experience with the English language, conventionally spoken, will hold them closely enough—perhaps too closely—to our idiom.

Advanced students, able to comprehend the loose-periodic-balanced patterns (perhaps under simpler names, like "chain," "suspense," and "contrast") may try their skill at composing sentences which by their structure keep readers in anticipation until the end, and sentences which play up tersely the contrast between two subjects. The simple suggestion that they start with a sentence requiring a *semicolon* is a good point of departure in the classroom laboratory; semicolon sentences by their nature are likely to be loose, but to have several clauses that can then be manipulated in the direction of periodic structure. While doing this, pupils can easily arrive at numerous variations of sentence openings: participle, adverb, preposition, pronoun, subordinate clause. And almost without fail some member of the class will have written a semicolon sentence that either is already an example of balanced statement or lends itself readily to re-designing in that

pattern. From somebody's semicolon sentence, likewise, you will be able to develop the repeat pattern of parallel structure.

After such laboratory experiences, how much more specifically you can advise your boys and girls on possible improvements of their expression! No longer will you be using vague admonitions like "Write better," "Put more spirit into that, somehow," or "Liven this up." You can "talk shop" with your students, just as your music, art, and manual arts colleagues do. In fact, your whole classroom atmosphere will be transformed as you introduce the workshop or studio attitude. With a reflectoscope or similar device you can project specimens on the wall for class observation. And you will not be asking students to arrive at the prose style of Milton, Addison, or Burke (a person of 1940-41 would not want to, if he could), but to aim at the pliable, hard-hitting modern prose used by editors, magazine writers, and columnists.

Nor need you fear that your teaching must become "mechanical." Some teachers will be tediously, terrifyingly mechanical when using this craftsmanship approach, just as other teachers (or perhaps these aforementioned potentially mechanical ones) now, when attempting to instruct in writing, either never get beyond their fetish of grammatical correctness or fly off in a vague nebula of "appreciation" and fail to touch on actual craftsmanship at all. The best advice seems to be: approach these fundamental craftsmanship or mechanical aspects with a light, deft touch—often by inference and incidental reference—not too soberly (but earnestly); for, after all, your writing activities should be play—though *consequential* play. In the pedagogy of conveying a feeling for our plastic lan-

guage the danger is not in the *mechanics* of our subject but in the *mechanical inclinations* of the teacher.

Visualizing some of your pupils in their conscious attempts to change and manipulate their word combinations, you may recall the anecdote of the centipede whose myriad legs moved in smooth co-ordination, sending waves along the body like those of a wheatfield in the breezes of June. Presently some mischievous creature—it must have been a spider—asked the centipede how he manipulated all his feet to such good effect. "I don't know," replied the thousand-legger, "I never thought about that, but now I'll give special attention to how I do it." He started, and fell into a terrific traffic-jam!

Some boys and girls, too, experience expressional paralysis and confusion. This is particularly noticeable among older students who have been going along for years without taking thought of their style. But the transitional stage is brief, and growing pains soon cease. Even this period is not dismal, for it is illumined by the enthusiasm which accompanies the discovery of a new medium of expression or of new possibilities in an old medium. It is buoyed also by the self-starting qualities of this procedure. Once having discovered the vast possibilities in the molding of language, a pupil is not quite satisfied until he has experimented with a few of them. It's as with a swimmer who, hearing about several new strokes, has no rest until he has tried them out.

For the achievement of a craftsman's attitude toward language, teachers of the very young boy and girl have unrivaled opportunities. You can *initiate* the craftsman's point of view in your pupils by games, experiments, inferences, comparisons with other arts, etc. You can make the idea of language flexibility so much

a part of them that it will not be "second nature," but *nature itself*; you can free them from ever living through the self-consciousness of the centipede. You have them so early that they will not be paralyzed when thinking about the many possibilities; you can accustom them to using these possibilities so early that they will never be paralyzed later. When advanced to high school, your one-time pupils will have a more practical command of language than most adults, and a specimen of their writings may then read like one out of a hundred, not like one of 99 others.

Our thoughts have been on topics like sentence openings, lengths, and types; on journalism and letters—work-a-day world considerations, all of them. Some hearers may think me presumptuous for having subtitled my talk "A Basis of Literary Craftsmanship." "When do we hear about dramas, essays, sonnets, odes?" they would say.

True, we have not discussed these literary types, but anybody who has been following me realizes that these literary forms were implied in the background all the while. We have been establishing the basic aesthetic on which all literary form is built. Rhythm and cadence of phrase, sweep and rhythm of thought progression, tempo of pacing—these and many other qualities are but mature fruitions of our humble principle. Writers of the world's greatest poetry and prose have taken advantage of language plasticity to revise, revise, and revise again. A person doubting this should spend some time among original manuscripts in our university libraries or in the British Museum or the Oxford Bodleian. Literary ideas may arrive swiftly and mysteriously, but the embodiment of them in artistic form is a matter of perspiration and revision.



We ought to have available more first and second versions of masterpieces; apparently authors have had their wastebaskets too handy! Somebody would give us an admirable textbook for a composition course by editing a volume filled with manuscripts showing cancellations and substitutions made during the process of composing great pieces of prose and verse. Because of their sheer intellectual brilliance, a few pieces of writing have been pronounced great in spite of a wretched style, but a majority of the ideas, plots, and fantasies that we enjoy in literature would have fallen as if from broken wings if unsupported by strength of phrase. Ultimately what makes art

out of the ingredients for a potential poem, essay, or novel is craftsmanship—the same craftsmanship in kind, though greater in degree—that we touch upon when in the second grade we lead our little authors to see that “He went home” may also be stated “Home he went.”

So we are not taking the romance out of self-expression. Far from it. On the contrary, for students in elementary, high school, and college classes, and for the teacher in his humble duties of inculcating a way of writing for the work-a-day world, we add a new romance to writing (and, incidentally, to our reading of prose and verse)—the romance of a new awareness of an artistic medium.

#### GROWING UP WITH BOOKS

(Continued from page 166)

At one stop six-year-old twin girls are regular patrons. They go straight to the shelves and with confidence make their own selections. The father, a W.P.A. worker, had been bringing books home from the bookmobile for the past two years. He wanted his children to grow up with books in the home and as the children became old enough to make trips to the book truck, he encouraged them to do so. They indicated unusual interest and taste in their selections.

The greatest thrill of all is to see a youngster or two standing by the roadside, faces alight with anticipation, arms stiffly outstretched to show a book. They are flagging to a stop their “library truck”! We believe we have found a way to help build America—to increase the number of intelligent thinking citizens in our county. We know we are helping to keep our youngsters busy and happy. A former police chief tells us the library service is cutting juvenile delinquency in

half. The service is enriching the school program. We could and will do a better job as time goes on. At present we need many more books and still closer working relations with other workers in our county. Our teachers, we hope, will work more closely with us as time goes on. We need their help in getting the right book to the right child—we know the books, but we don’t know the reading level of each child as does his teacher. This closer working relationship is developing. We know that it will come. We know too that we must make our service to adults a still more vital part of their program of living. Our Farm Bureau, Grange, and Home Demonstration agent friends will help us there. We have a long way to go, but we are on the way and we believe it is the right way for our county. Good libraries in every school and in every community would be hard to get. The bookmobile can be paid for and it is giving children books with which to grow up.



# Children's Books In Adult Libraries

SISTER M. ANTONITA

*Librarian, Marian College  
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CHILDREN'S BOOKS, from the date of their first appearance, were promptly consigned within the four walls of school rooms. There, they were forced to fall in line with books that had a stern, forbidding look about them. These stern, forbidding books were textbooks, but the story books really had no good reason to feel out of place, for they, too, were stern looking and unattractive. Their covers were dull and drab and their bindings were awkward and bulky; their pages were crowded with lines of heavy black print and with illustrations that seemed more like blots of blackest ink than gay pictures to amuse little children.

The time came, however, when a decided change was introduced. Writers of children's books and, above all, illustrators became keenly aware that there was much awry with children's books. They were convinced that in not a single respect were they suited to children's needs. And so, writers began to inject into their stilted, awkward style new elements—the elements of appropriateness of subject, of simplicity of treatment, and of clearness. Illustrators began to exchange their dull and drab shades for bright, rich, pleasing hues; they began to put life, grace, and action into their sketches and prints.

Then, the fortunate thing happened. The parking place in the old school house became unbearable to the gaily colored children's books, and so, one fine day, they played the best game of their young lives—they played truant. Tumbling

down from the musty shelves, they hopped over the old-fashioned benches, scurried down the rickety stairs, and rushed out into the open. Once outside, they hustled along the broad road that led straight to the public library. With a loud clatter, they dashed through the wide open doors into the spacious lobby. All out of breath, they could blurt out just one brief sentence: "We've come to stay."

The sedate librarians, snugly enshrined behind long desks, were puzzled, bewildered, horrified. Never before was such unseemly conduct displayed within the sacred precincts of the library. Their first impulse, after they had regained their poise, was to hustle the intruders back from whence they came, but something had happened during that brief moment when the librarians paused to take a look at the consignment before them. That was the saving moment for the children's books. Contrary to all tradition, the librarians refrained from driving off the strange, unruly crowd. Instead, they announced that there would be a library committee meeting.

The proceedings at this meeting were conducted according to the most rigid traditional practices, yet, something had again gone wrong somewhere along the route, for the conclusion was not formulated according to the usual moth-balled rule, but something new had come forth; namely, a decision that these charming youngsters should be housed

right in with the dignified adult volumes. It was a momentous step, not altogether in the right direction, but pretty close to it anyway.

Promptly, the children's books were hoisted into place; but their joy was short-lived, for many a tiny booklet found itself squeezed clear out of breathing space between two huge adult volumes. The librarians noted the awkwardness of the situation immediately, and so, without further waste of time (no committee meeting this time), they decided to group the children's books on separate stacks. That improved the situation considerably, for now, each gaily bedecked volume was well in sight. So far so good!

It was soon noted, however, that there was something else amiss. Only a few of the bravest of the bright-eyed youngsters ventured into the library to read or look at pictures. Why, just why, did the little ones stay away? It took librarians and teachers but a brief span of time to spot the difficulty. How could the little ones use the books meant for them, if to get even a mere peek at their own stack meant to walk into an immense reading room, lined with giant shelves that held within their eleven-inch yawns volumes of all dimensions. It meant to walk past long massive tables edged with huge chairs. Then, too, the people who occupied these chairs and tables all looked so very forbidding, so very dignified. They were, of course, earnest students and scholars who took their work seriously; but who, in their eager search for knowledge, forgot to look pleasant. A few of the bolder youngsters did finally pass the barriers, but what scholar relished the distractions which these youngsters offered as they leafed noisily through their extra-size Mother Goose books!

Librarians and teachers soon discovered what was best to do, but it took them a long time to put the idea across to city directors, and it took still longer to find the means with which to finance the new arrangement.

The new arrangement resolved itself into three possibilities which were to meet the various levels of library income. The first suggested separate libraries for children; the second, a separate department for children within the library for adults; and the third, a separate room.

Today, the separate-room scheme is found in most public libraries. We are all familiar with the general arrangement of such rooms—the three-foot shelves, ranging all along the wall space, the low tables, the tiny chairs, and all the other abbreviated fixtures so characteristic of children's quarters.

And so, after many years of experimenting, we find the situation which puzzled those early librarians solved. Perhaps, one should let the matter rest right here, for after all, children's books are meant for children, and once service in that direction has reached a satisfactory level, there is no need to concoct further difficulties. However, I should like to say one word in behalf of adult readers.

Could children's books serve adults? They certainly could. What man or woman is not amused, thrilled, or occasionally even deeply touched when he picks up a child's book and leafs through it. If that is true (and it is), then, the children's books should be put at the disposal of adults. This, however, presents a new problem.

Like the tiny tot who dared not venture into the main reading room, the adult is kept from entering the children's room. He might stand near the door and, with a wistful look, eye the treasures

of childhood, but he is kept back by the mental picture of himself which he is formulating in his mind.

He sees himself as a giant entering the land of midgets. With one stride, he crosses the small room; stooping low, he lifts up a tiny volume, and, looking awkwardly for a seat, he sees with alarm the tiny chairs. The table would serve the purpose well, but his sense of propriety vetoes that thought. Thoroughly embarrassed, he decides to leave the uncomfortable place, but as he attempts to move, he is forced to look clumsily from side to side in order to avoid stepping on the little ones whose tiny chairs are scattered in a bewildering array all over the floor. Abashed, ashamed, humiliated, he arrives at the door.

No, the joys of this room are not for him. He is sure of that, and so, he pivots about and makes a hurried exit.

What could be done to solve this problem? The following might be a workable attempt: A display of children's books might be put on a table in the main reading room. These selections, with appropriate posters, should be changed frequently. Adults, feeling the natural urge to pick up and handle these attractive books, will experience no embarrassment, no bewilderment. At their ease, they scan one tiny volume after the other. The amusement of the moment, the train of happy memories which the tales and pictures recall are but a few of the benefits adults derive. There are many others. One of the most important is also the most natural. Adults cannot refrain from voicing their happy reactions; they must relate to willing listeners the tales that amused them most, and so, without knowing it, adults are spreading *children's literature*, bringing joy and happiness to young and old.

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#### KEEPING UP WITH CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

(Continued from page 174)

arily, although there are stories for, and poems by, children. Especially good is "The Poetry Corner."

One way of acquainting one's self with this area is through a study group of teachers. The method of handling this material will be determined by the disposition and the personality of the instructor in charge, by the time allotted to a children's literature course, and by the number of students in the class and their attitudes and interests. Committees of students may investigate more or less completely a single agency, and then report, either by single student contributions or by an aggregate committee paper, to the entire class. Or individual students may be given the responsibility

for becoming "specialists" on an agency. These students may report to class at a specified time or on various occasions when the results of their research will illuminate, illustrate and round out discussions. On the other hand, the instructor may feel that the limited time does not warrant lengthy student participation. In that case, he can present the material in lecture form.

However this unit is handled, the teacher who has anything to do with children's literature should know where to get materials when she needs them. A unit of work specifically designed to acquaint her with this background material will pay increasingly greater dividends as the years go by.

# Terrible Tales For Tots

MAY M. WRIGHT

Des Moines, Iowa

**D**O NOT be surprised if your pupils are indifferent to fairy tales. Their lack of interest in such fiction is shared by the majority of today's children, according to a recent report made by the American Library Association.

This report reveals that the small patron of a library usually prefers books presenting truth. The first question he asks about a story is "Did it really happen?" To him, reality is new, and therefore thrilling.

The weary adult who finds refuge in fairy tales may feel hurt because children do not appreciate the stories he was fed upon years ago. Perhaps he does not remember how his own childish nature recoiled from those same tales.

Frequently one hears this remark: "Children are not so gullible as they used to be." And we are left to infer that in some incredible manner the child mind has changed. It has not changed; it has been given freedom of expression. Now the child is allowed the "pursuit of happiness," and he turns toward joy as naturally as a flower faces the sunlight.

We cannot blame the small reader for avoiding much of yesterday's juvenile literature on account of its gloom. Betty Pringle mourns her dead pig. Jemmy is drowned. Dicky Dilver's wife is thrown into the river. Jack breaks his crown. Johnny is lost. Jenny Wren dies. Dolly's head is split in two. Henry kills one of his companions. Sophy has a tooth-ache.

Try to recall the tales you recited most often in your own childhood. How many of them were free from mournfulness?

There was the tragedy of Red Riding Hood. There was the murder of Cock Robin. There was the excruciating death of the Babes in the Wood.

Suppose there had been censors for the children's literature in "the good old days." These features would have been omitted from that classic, "Mother Goose": Three love scenes. Numerous references to murders and hangings. The accounts of such thieves as the Piper's Son, Taffy, and the Knave of Hearts.

What would the critics have done about the wife-beater, the sorceress, and the father who cut off his daughter's hands? Alas, what would they have said of Punch, that noted violator of the law?

Here is a summary of a children's book sponsored by a Boston publishing company in the eighteenth century: "Girl planned to have her parents poisoned." The tale is about an extravagant maiden who plotted against her father and mother because they would not increase her allowance. Shocking? Yes, but no more so than many juvenile stories that were read in the sedate nineteenth century.

There lies before me a book which was enjoyed (?) by youngsters seventy years ago. Its title? *Naughty Girls*. One of the characters, little Miss Baster, "known as a taster far and wide," finally ate rat poison. Stubborn Betty was terrified at night by beetles and mice, while lazy Lucy was condemned for being cheerful and wishing to play.

What incentive for happiness could Lucy, or any other little girl find in the illustrations of those melancholy books



of a past era? Tommy, bereft of father and mother, looking dejectedly into a pond. The Beadle making Cock Robin's shroud. An infant's corpse being viewed by the young brother and sister. Tots trudging to school with "little hearts half broken." Shock-headed Peter "with his nasty hair and hands." Ned tearing the wings from flies. "Poor sick Sallie" lying ill in bed. A starving dog. A poorly clad old man shivering in winter. A boy flogging his nurse-maid. Two doctors discussing the death of a patient.

And the language? The other day I attempted to record some of the poignant words found in a famous old collection of fairy tales. The list included misery, rage, sorrow, fury, jealousy, grief, wickedness, covetousness, poverty, misfortune, weeping, cannibals, anger, envy, cruelty, ugliness, danger, gallows, executioner, pain, groan, shriek, dirt, prey, suspicion, prison, disappointment, scaffold, agony—. But I could endure no more.

In desperation, I turned to a representative book written in the 'sixties for adolescents. Surely, I thought, the mood

of these stories would be more cheerful. But death stalked on most of the pages. The first narrative concerned a beautiful governess, who pined away and died because she had been accused wrongfully of theft. The second was of a girl who married an unknown young man against the wishes of her parents. During their honeymoon, the groom was arrested as an embezzler. The bride died from grief almost immediately.

Not all youthful readers of grandmother's time swallowed the stories provided for them. A few were courageous enough to compose books of their own. For instance, in 1835 a fourteen-year-old boy printed and illustrated a group of poems written by his sister, age thirteen. Other youngsters of less initiative turned to histories and biographies, all written from the adult's standpoint.

Fortunately, our modern libraries contain a wealth of non-fiction presented in the vocabulary of the up-to-date child and youth. The newest juvenile stories are realistic and inspiring. At last, the juniors are getting a break.

### UNDER THE CIRCUS TENT

(Continued from page 171)

A plan whereby the circus becomes recreational and educational. Suggestions for school activities around the circus. Good list of source material.

*The Circus From Rome to Ringling.* By Earl Chapin May. Duffield, 1932.

Historical account of the circus from its beginning in Rome told by a circus man.

*Circus Parade.* By J. S. Clarke. Scribner, 1937.

An interpretation of the circus "illustrated from old prints and pictures and modern photographs." Printed in Great Britain.

*Hold That Tiger.* By Mabel Stark. Caxton Printers.

Tense excitement in the day's work of the queen of tiger trainers.

*Hold Yer Hosses!* By Robert Sherwood. Macmillan, 1932.

A Barnum clown takes readers under the tent.

*How to Put on an Amateur Circus.* By Fred A. Hacker and Prescott Eames. Denison, 1923.

Detailed information and drawings for stunts and sideshows.

*This Way to the Big Show.* By Dexter William Fellows. Viking, 1936.  
Photographs and reminiscences.

*Through the Back Door of the Circus.* By George Brinton Beal. McLoughlin.

A very human account of the hazardous life of the circus.

# The Newbery Award Again

EDITOR'S NOTE: The lively critical interest in children's literature evident in the following letters is gratifying to all who are interested in advancing literary standards in this particular field. *The Review* will be glad to receive from its readers other expressions of opinion on this subject.

The articles referred to are: "What Are Little Boys Made Of?" (Editorial), October, 1939; "The Newbery Award: Open Forum," April, 1940; "Children's Opinions of Newbery Prize Books," Rose Zeligs, October, 1940.

DEAR SIR:

Is *The Elementary English Review* trying to discredit librarians? Has it set out to take the selection of the Newbery Medal books from the hands of librarians? I gather from the statements presented in your pages in recent months that it is the opinion of teachers and the editor that they should be the ones to select the Newbery Medal winners. Unless Mr. Melcher should express dissatisfaction with the selections I cannot understand the reasons for such a campaign.

Are teachers trained in the art of evaluating recreational reading to any extent? It seems to me that the teaching profession has enough responsibilities without undertaking those of a librarian. From my experience of fourteen years I find that teachers run to librarians on every occasion concerning books except something relating to methods and textbooks. They do not have the opportunity to learn about books elsewhere.

Most critics of the Newbery Medal selections fail to take into account the rest of the books published in the year that a particular title is criticized. Remember that the terms are: the most *distinguished* book for children written by a citizen or resident of the United States and published during the preceding year; the work must be original. Muriel E.

Cann has expressed this so clearly in her *Newbery Medal Books 1922-1933; Their Authors, Illustrators, and Publishers* published by the Boston Public Library. I recommend this little book to all of your readers. Miss Cann says, "The books are selected, not because they are enjoyed by a large number of children, but because they contain some remarkable qualities which place them apart from the ordinary children's book."

I haven't liked every one of the awards myself. I think (and I stress the fact that this is *my* opinion) *Dobry* is the poorest selection which has been made. And if you insist on the children's opinion they will agree with me that the award should have gone to *Away Goes Sally*. However, under the rules Elizabeth Coatsworth could win a second award only on unanimous vote of the committee and this did not happen. I think now as I did then that Rourke's *Davy Crockett* or Meigs' *Wind in the Chimney* would have been a better selection than *Dobry*, failing *Sally*.

Recently I spent some time studying the more outstanding books year by year since the first Newbery Medal (1921) just to see for my own satisfaction whether time has justified the wisdom of the awards. I used for the basis of my study *Best Juvenile Books* prepared by the Book Information Section of the New York State Library which was based on votes of children's librarians and published for many years in the *Library Journal*, and the *Horn Book*. Looking back now and considering each year's output of children's books I don't think the committees have gone far astray. Even for 1936 when *Roller Skates* won (and that would not have been my selection at the time) I wouldn't like any other title better now.

Miss Zeligs' report of her findings in the October issue with her sixth grade is interesting. I venture to say however, that any other

sixth grade teacher in the country at large would find the same things to be true. I have seen such surveys tried in this city. Any children's librarian could have foretold the results.

I want to challenge her statement that librarians are closer to books and that teachers are closer to children. Teachers are closer to children in their classes, yes, but it is usually the same age children year after year. The children's librarian is in daily contact with nine grades of children, not to mention preschool and kindergarten ages. It seems logical that the children's librarian has a larger view of the whole of children's literature and children's needs than the teacher whose experience is limited to one class.

Teachers complain that the Newbery titles appeal only to better readers. Naturally. So does any *good* book. It is only the good readers who can appreciate the best things. The same thing is true of adults and adult books. Are the best books read by all adult readers? No. Look at the popularity of Temple Bailey and Kathleen Norris alone. And why harp so much on popularity as a basis of selection for children's books? I can't remember that anyone mentions popularity when he criticizes the Pulitzer and other adult awards. If popularity were the basis we might wake up some morning and find the *Big Little Books* have all won the Newbery Medal.

And why do the editor and others complain when a good book for girls wins the Medal? Why shouldn't a girl's book win? Don't girls read? You should all be grateful that there are girl's books being written which are deemed worthy of receiving any award. Stories for girls have always been inferior both in quality and quantity to books for boys, but they have improved so much in the last ten years that it is almost unbelievable. Who can say but that the Newbery Medal awards have stimulated their production?

I can show you many boys and girls who thoroughly enjoy *Thimble Summer* and *Caddie Woodlawn*. I know many teachers who have

read both aloud to classes and reported much enthusiasm. *Caddie* is an excellent example of Americanism which is a subject currently clamored for by teachers. I cannot see why you think this book lacks vigor. *Storms on the Labrador* would be a good selection for an award, but you find this book's audience more limited than for any title which has ever won the Newbery Medal because today's children simply cannot read dialect. You expressed a wish for a more masculine book to win the award. This has happened in *Daniel Boone* since you made the wish, but I have searched the pages of *The Elementary English Review* in vain for word of your approval.<sup>2</sup>

As for the point of difficulty which is brought up so often. Don't forget the wide range of age, interest and reading abilities which must be covered by the word "children." Numerous books written for adults have been adopted by children for their own. You cannot consider mere difficulty in books and ignore other factors. Anything worse than a book written or judged from the point of view of a wordlist I can't imagine. Look what Thorndike tried to do to some of the best children's books in his attempt to simplify the vocabulary. Butchery, no less. A mistake commonly made by teachers (and others) is to use Newbery Medal books and other books as well which would be unsuitable from the point of view of story content in elementary grades. Why do people try to cram books too old for grade children down their throats? They simply show their lack of familiarity with children's books.

The charges of "sentimentality" and "faded prettiness" in the Newbery selections have been made more than once. This is simply ridiculous. The Newbery committee is composed of a different group of people each year who naturally contribute different viewpoints. A more realistic group of people facing the future and attempting to give future citizens something to hold on to I do not be-

<sup>2</sup> Favorably reviewed in the May, 1940 issue, page 203.

lieve you could find than children's librarians. Attend some of their meetings and hear some of their discussions! It has been the tendency of the times to tear down ideals in the past few years but children's librarians have been working vigorously to hold fast to that which is good.

One last point which I want to bring out is that there are so many children nowadays who cannot read. Yes, we do have them in the libraries as well as those children who can read. Many of these children who cannot read well come voluntarily for picture books which they can appreciate and many more of them are brought by parents and teachers for aid from the librarian in teaching them how to read. Every day they come in increasing numbers for guidance presenting more and more problems in book selection and in book purchase as well. When are educators going to wake up and teach children to read well enough to take their places as intelligent citizens of tomorrow?

—BETTY HAMILTON

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#### TO THE EDITOR:

The article entitled, "Children's Opinions Of Newbery Prize Books," by Miss Rose Zeligs, which appeared in the October, 1940, issue of *The Elementary English Review* has tempted me to express my opinion on this same subject.

As a teacher of library in the public schools of Portland, Oregon I was very much interested in the research Miss Zeligs had done, and her analysis of her sixth grade pupils' reactions to the Newbery prize books. We must concede that Miss Zeligs proves her points very effectively and the careful study she has made in her room is certainly worthy of thoughtful consideration. However, one important weakness in her analysis looms in my mind. Can the reaction of sixth grade youngsters to a list of books chosen with all child-

hood in mind be a fair analysis? Is that a broad enough study? In my experience as a teacher, the Newbery books have found their niche in such varying grades and by such various types of readers that I couldn't possibly class them all together in one grade.

Let us take *The Dark Frigate*, which was not popular in the group analyzed. That book has never been popular with any one particular class in my experience, but the Hawes books are immensely popular with the boys who eat up sea stories. Sometimes a clique of these boys will be found in the sixth and seventh grades but far more often they appear in the eighth grade classes. Just now I have a group of eighth grade boys who want nothing but sea stories, which for me is a welcome change from the sixth grade's insatiable desire for dog stories.

Girlish girls from the fourth through the eighth grades who want girl stories have found great delight in *Thimble Summer*, while the child who was intrigued by the mysterious beginnings in Masefield's *Martin Hyde*, *The Duke's Messenger* will also be easily urged to read *The Trumpeter of Krakow*. Much here depends upon the enthusiasm of the presentation of the book. I could go on mentioning each of the Newbery prize books individually but the same general statement is true of all the books. They cannot be graded. They have popular appeal to varying types of readers. And does not the list cover most types?

There are many excellent sixth grade book lists available with selection based on book popularity if that was the need of teacher. Perhaps the Junior Literary Guild has popularity in mind in their selections. However, we find the purpose of the Newbery Medal is not awarded for popularity. The book is selected as "the most distinctive contribution to children's literature." Selections should be judged, therefore, on the literary quality of the books, the lasting value to children's literature, and veracity of characterization, as well as on juvenile appeal.



I like to think of the Newbery award each year as a guide for mothers building a home library of permanent value. These are books which she can buy and know that the appeal will go on into adulthood because of literary qualities they possess. Such a collection will not be thought of in later years as, "The books I used to get a great kick out of when I was a child." Instead, we would have the adult say, "I still enjoy an evening with this book." *Alice in Wonderland* isn't the most popular book on my shelves, but the child who grows up with Alice in the home can't get along without a copy as an adult.

What about the home that Lucinda rolls into on her skates? "Glory be to God," she's become a part of the family after being read aloud by the mother. She is quoted at the dinner table and has become a lively addition to the family. Lucinda isn't for any special age; she is for friends from eight to eighty who can appreciate her independent spirit and courageous determination.

I am not holding a brief for the unfailing good judgment of the committees who select the Newbery awards. Other books published

since 1929 do have literary value equal, and in some opinions, excelling the books selected. Juvenile appeal is certainly important and librarians as well as teachers are frank to criticize *Dobry*, for example, from that standpoint. One hundred per cent agreement is impossible to attain. There will always be many differences of opinion. I am curious to know if Howard Pease was pleased this year with the virile quality of James Dougherty's book. At least a man won the award once more. I would also like to say, as a teacher, I am perfectly willing that the Newbery selection be made by a committee of librarians. As a teacher, I am far too busy to know thoroughly all the children's books that come off the press. Evaluation of books as they appear is one of the primary tasks of the librarian and she has access to these books as well. I for one, am glad to respect her judgment as to what may or may not be the distinctive contribution to children's literature for the year.

—ISABEL C. McLELLAND  
Beach School  
Portland, Oregon.

# Editorial

## Higher Critical Standards

STATISTICS of the book trade reveal that, commercially, the publication of children's books is no longer an "infant industry." The number of juvenile titles is exceeded only by fiction during many months of the year,<sup>1</sup> and each spring and fall, librarians, teachers, parents, and children are buried under an avalanche of new volumes.

This state of things is a little difficult for many of us to grasp, for we have long been accustomed to give enthusiastic and generally uncritical support to the publication of books for children, in our eagerness to establish this type of literature for the enrichment of children's lives. But facts are not to be gainsaid, and we must, somehow, adjust ourselves to a new situation.

The very number of new books can easily bewilder the librarian or teacher confronted with the necessity of making a selection. Her problem is complicated further by the fact that, almost without exception, the volumes are very attractive in appearance and, from an adult viewpoint, suitable in content.

To break trails through this wilderness is clearly no easy matter. It demands of every one who deals with children's books a heightened critical attitude.

Not to detract, in any way, from the worth of the majority of the new publications, it may not be amiss to point out, here, a few less desirable features beginning to appear in children's books.

First, there has been a noticeable tendency, of late, to issue certain hard-to-classify volumes as juveniles. One suspects that these manuscripts were not prepared with children in mind at all.

<sup>1</sup> See *The Publishers' Weekly*, first issue of each month, for statistics of the publishing trade.

Rambling reminiscences, however pleasant, and subject-matter books too thin in content for the adult lists, are not necessarily adapted to children.

Then there are occasionally books presented in unsuitable style, as, for example one otherwise good historical novel for young people, marred by stream-of-consciousness writing.

Finally, and this is one of the gravest faults, too many of the books issued, especially for younger children, are trivial in content. Exceptionally beautiful in format, prepared and presented with meticulous care, they are shallow and inane in substance. What child is going to enjoy reading about Betty and Billy who went to Grandfather's farm and fed Spot and Pussy and the fluffy chickies when he can follow the adventures of Gang Busters and The Spirit? At the opposite extreme from this trivial naivete is trivial sophistication. A few books have appeared lately whose appeal is limited to blasé little urbanites, equipped with an esoteric knowledge of what is done and what is *not* done and is therefore ridiculous.

Children's literature needs to present, in clear thought and language, absorbing content, wholesome attitudes, and rich sensory stimuli. Children, no less than adults, have a right to expect effectively handled plot, lifelike, well-defined characters, and authentic, convincing backgrounds.

Many volumes offer all these desiderata. Book committees, therefore, can afford to apply high critical standards, for they will still have a large field from which to choose among the new publications.

# Reviews And Abstracts

## The Thorndike-Century Senior Dictionary.

Scott, Foresman and Company, 1941.

The recent appearance of the Thorndike-Century Senior Dictionary naturally causes us again to give serious thought to how we should select such a book for use in school. Considerable stir was caused a few years ago by the appearance of the first book in this series, the Thorndike Century Junior Dictionary. That dictionary was said to be the first to be based upon a scientific word count, the first in which the definitions and explanations were specifically written for children and not reduced or condensed from definitions originally intended for adults, and the first which followed the principle that definitions for children must be longer than those for adults instead of shorter, both because simpler words must be used and because more explanation is necessary if one is to make contact with the child's more limited experience. This second book in the series has been prepared with the same point of view but with adaptations to a higher grade level. It is an important addition to the group of advanced school dictionaries and we need to ask how it compares with others.

First of all, we want the children to use a dictionary with ease and pleasure. Unless they do, there is little hope they will turn to this type of book unless required to do so. The dictionary, like any other book, therefore, should be as attractive as possible both on first appearance and through all its use. Suppose we open on a table a number of school dictionaries. We will find that most of the junior dictionaries have open, readable type of good size, with leading or space between the lines to make for readability. If then we turn to the senior or advanced school dictionaries, we immediately see a much closer page with smaller type and little space between lines. Even an expert reader must look very closely

to read the solid paragraphs. Now the reasoning is that older children are better readers, that they use the dictionary only occasionally, and that when they do so it does not hurt them to look closely. The new Thorndike Senior Dictionary does not seem to adhere to that reasoning because the page looks more like the junior dictionaries in open-ness and attractiveness.

After appearance, one naturally considers the number of entries. "The new Thorndike has 63,000 entries." Other dictionaries of about the same level say they have 83,000 entries, 100,000 entries, or 110,000 entries. Here one is in doubt what to think because practically all the dictionaries fail to tell us certain facts. First, how many of the entries are on the margin in the main alphabetical series? Many persons believe that in a dictionary to be used by a child every entry that we expect him to find should be on the margin along with all the other words. Others believe that the child can readily be taught to look for some forms of words under others. Someone should do some research on this point, but in the meantime we will all follow our own ideas as to what is practical. The Thorndike Senior Dictionary places all the word forms which it uses on the margin, but includes some phrase items within the definition. Second, the dictionary should tell us how many in their total of items are "customary variations." A striking case is words which indicate the doer of an action, such as "runner," "baker," and the like. Should a dictionary add *-er* to practically every verb in its list and count these nouns as new entries? The Thorndike Senior Dictionary does not do this. A competing book which claims many more entries often does do this, as in the case of "bailer," "baiter," "balancer," to mention a few found right together. Then, should a dic-

tionary for children take every adjective and add *-ly* and *-ness*, and count these as two new entries? The Thorndike Century does not do this consistently, but some of its competitors do. On points such as these, all dictionaries should give the teacher specific information, but one suspects that sometimes the adding of customary variations is not a help to the child, but rather a method of padding the word list.

Before one can decide whether to adopt the new Thorndike Senior Dictionary or some other volume, it is necessary to come to some opinions as to whether meanings should be arranged under parts of speech. This is the custom of all adult dictionaries, and has been the custom of most school dictionaries up to the Thorndike books. It is hard for a teacher to form an opinion on this point because her training has been on the traditional type of dictionary and because publishers which follow the tradition will play up this time-honored custom to the full. This book in the Thorndike series, like the first one, gives meanings after each word in one numbered series from the most common to the least common, without regard to part of speech. It claims that this method works more efficiently because the child is not looking for an adjective or a noun but is looking for a meaning. Other persons have said that they doubt whether anyone not a school teacher knows what part of speech he is looking for. The ultimate answer, of course, is the child's success in using the book to locate the right meaning, and we need to wait for research to tell which method works best.

A special feature of this new dictionary is one that characterized the junior dictionary, the use of sentences to clarify meaning and to make usage clear. This volume has over 15,000 such sentences. Here it is hard to make comparisons because other dictionaries also use sentences or illustrative phrases. They

do not, however, tell us how many they use. Here as in the case of kinds of entries, we should be given more facts.

This Thorndike book claims the use of many scientific studies. It uses the Thorndike word list and tries to explain each word in words which are statistically shown to be easier. It has chosen words from word counts in special fields. Finally, it is the first to use the enormous study, "The English Semantic Count," by Dr. Thorndike and Dr. Lorge, in selecting meanings.

To answer many of the questions suggested, what we really should do is to equip a room with a number of different dictionaries and find out from actual use which ones the children preferred, which they used more efficiently, and which seemed most suitable for building the dictionary habit. Lacking such an experiment, we should make a systematic comparison on points such as we have discussed. The best way to do this is, if one does not have time for a large statistical study, to open one dictionary at random and then to turn to the same part of the word list in another. Compare, let us say, 50 consecutive words. See exactly which entries each book includes that the other does not. Then compare the meanings shown under corresponding entries. Then compare explanation of identical meanings in each book to see which will be of most help to the children who are going to use that book. Then, turn at random to another place and make a similar comparison of entries, meanings, and explanations. If one sampling seems to favor one book and the second the other book, make more samplings until you have satisfied yourself that you have fairly compared the books and have a real reason for saying that your children will profit more from one than from the other.

—E. W. DOLCH  
University of Illinois  
Urban, Illinois.



**Compton's Pictured Encyclopedia.** New edition. F. E. Compton and Company, 1940.

*Compton's Pictured Encyclopedia* has been intelligently improved, revised, and extended since its first appearance in 1922.

The 1940 edition which is just off the press admirably illustrates the editors' "continuous revision" policy. The advertising circular claims 171,054 words of newly written text, 311 new and revised articles, 198 new pictures, charts, and maps, and 102 pages added to the main text. Also, the 1940 Compton's carries several special new features treating subjects which have added significance in the light of the affairs of today, for example, a review of the conditions and factors which have lead to the struggle between dictatorships and democracies and a more complete and up-to-date treatment of Latin America and its place in world affairs.

Of special interest are the new articles in the field of science and invention, such as the growth in the plastic industry, new vitamin discoveries and frequency modulation in radio.

The quality of the new pictures and graphic materials is greatly improved. The captions or information given beneath them are concise and direct.

The Fact-index, which has been revised and greatly improved, still contains many unimportant references which are confusing to children. In general, younger children do not find the Fact-index as helpful as it should be.

In some instances the sentence structure is too involved for children. In the article, "Caterpillars," there is one sentence which contains 61 words.

To be of help and interest to children, sub-headings in articles should be clear, concise and informative. In general, this policy has been followed in Compton's. However, there are some glaring exceptions to this ideal. One notable example is found in the first sub-heading in the article on "Cattle", "The freight engines of early days." One child using this book handed it to the librarian saying, "This can't be the right book. I don't want engines." Allusive headings, especially in reference books intended for quick use, almost invariably are lost on children.

The reviewer is indebted to Mrs. Dorothy Norris, Supervisor of Major Work Classes, and to Miss Josephine Dillon, Librarian at Mount Auburn School, for the following unedited reactions from teachers and children.

The children consult Compton's first in all reference work. Although the text presents rather difficult reading material even the younger people find the pictures helpful. The Fact-index idea is useful for beginners in reference work.

—He'en O'Rourke.

The following are reactions of children:

It is a helpful book to have around. It has helped me a lot, I think it is wonderful. Sometimes it doesn't have what you want. But otherwise it is a good thing to have. —Abraham Nadler.

I think Compton's helps me a great deal in my research work for my lecture, only I think the articles should be kept in alphabetical order, then we would find them easier. —Flora Rubin.

—MARGARET L. WHITE

Supervisor of Elementary English  
Board of Education,  
Cleveland, Ohio.

# New Books For Boys and Girls

## FOR LITTLE CHILDREN

**Hercules, the Story of an Old-Fashioned Fire Engine.**

Written and illus. by Hardie Gramatky. G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1940. \$1.75.

When Hercules was new, he was called the most up-to-date fire engine in the world. Three spirited horses pulled him, and a spotted coach dog accompanied him to fires. But times change, and one day Hercules was replaced by motor-driven engines. His horses were sold, and Hercules and his friends were disconsolate. Then the city hall caught fire, and it was the stout-hearted Hercules who was the hero of the day.

The book is bound to have an unusual appeal to young children for several reasons. For one thing, fire-engines, fires, and horses are irresistible as subjects. The story is exciting and well told. Finally, the pictures will strike a child as not only very thrilling, but as distinctly funny—the horses showing their teeth as they charge toward a fire, the despondent firemen, and the fat mayor. Highly recommended.

**Jimmy and Jemima.** By Helen Sewell. Illus. by the author. Macmillan, 1940. \$1.00.

From a teacher's view-point, this book is especially commendable because it will not be hard for children to read. There are only a few lines of text on the left-hand page, facing a full-page picture on the right. The pictures are of a kind to appeal to a child's sense of humor, for Miss Sewell has used a sort of glorified comic-strip technique.

For all the story's simplicity, there is real meat in it—plot development, (conflict between brother and sister), character development, action, climax, and sound understanding of human relationships. These solemn-sounding qualities, however, should not lead a reader to assume that the book is heavy. On the contrary, it is a really funny story for little children of five to seven.

**April's Kittens.** Story and pictures by Clare Turlay Newberry. Harper, 1940. \$1.75.

This is one of the loveliest kitten books in recent

years. Mrs. Newberry's drawings have caught the softness, playfulness, and baby-fierceness of kittens most appealingly. The story is equally winning. It concerns a little girl's desire to find good homes for two of her pet's kittens, and to keep the third. The difficulty is that the family lives in a "one-cat apartment." City children will readily appreciate April's dilemma.

The wording of the narrative may perhaps be a little difficult for some children to read for themselves. All children, however, city and country, good readers and poor, will delight in the pictures.

**Alexander's Birthday Party.** By Marjorie Knight.

Illus. by Howard Simon. Dutton, 1940. \$1.50.

An adult receives the impression that this is too much written down to children. The effort to write from the child's viewpoint is apparent, and children who detect this will not completely enjoy the book.

The story concerns three adventurous toys who journey to the North Pole to celebrate the birthday of one of their number—Alexander, a blue-spotted horse. The details of their journey will amuse children. Sentence structure and vocabulary are rather difficult for eight- or nine-year-olds, while the subject-matter is unsuited for older children.

**The King's Day.** By Clare Huchet Bishop. Illus. by Doris Spiegel. Coward-McCann, 1940. \$1.50.

This story of the celebration of Epiphany in Normandy is told in a broken, nervous style, and in the present tense. These stylistic qualities heighten the foreign atmosphere of the narrative, but tend to increase the reading difficulty for children.

The characters are two brothers, Gaston and Vincent, their adored little cousin, Jeanette, and Terry, an orphan. The narrative describes the celebration of the Feast of Kings in rural Normandy, and Terry's good luck in winning the position of king of the feast. Children will surely notice the discrepancy between the text and illustration in the detail of "their large wooden shoes." For enjoyment, this book should be presented and interpreted by a sympathetic adult.